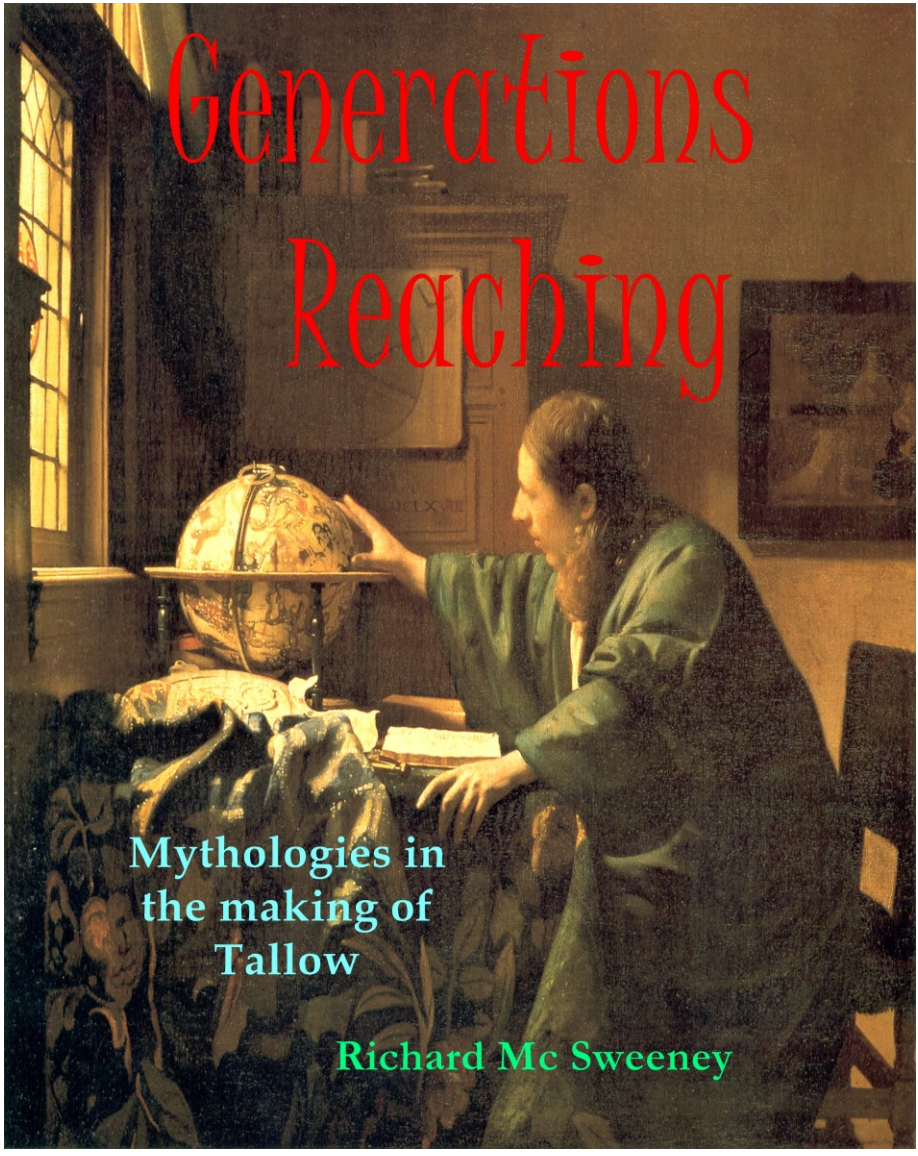
Generations
Reaching
Mythologies in
the making of
Tallow
Richard Mc Sweeney

Generations Reaching

- Mythologies in the making of Tallow -

Richard Mc Sweeney

Risteárd Mac Suibhne Uí Éire

GENERATIONS REACHING

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While I have made every attempt to ensure that the style and editing of this work is of the highest standards, I ask for your understanding if you should happen therein upon anything to the contrary.

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To the Beloved Profundities of my life ~

Sung-ja my wife, son Richard, and daughter Iris

Also by Richard Mc Sweeney

Myriam of Lebanon

A Jesus of Nazareth

Forthcoming titles

Hearing in the Write

Innkeeper's Fire

Richard Mc Sweeney of the ancient and enigmatic isle of Éire writes on a variety of themes, but primarily on those to do with promoting beauty, good-naturedness, love of family, artistic expression, respect for the natural world, and cosmic considerations.

Having spent six edifying years as a seminarian with the Missionary Society of St. Columban, Richard came to the conclusion that his calling in life was to be sought elsewhere. Thus, journeying onwards with a great sense of gratitude and many happy memories he came to sojourn for some nine years in the Republic of Korea followed by three in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and a further three in the United Arab Emirates.

While in Korea he earned a master's degree in Chinese Philosophy from Seoul National University, and a bachelor's in Korean Language and Literature from Kyunggi University. Both of which were conducted entirely through the mediums of Korean and Classical Chinese. He holds a diploma in Philosophy & Arts from St. Patrick's College, Maynooth in the county Kildare.

Richard a native of Fermoy in the county Cork lives with his wife and two children in the idyllic border village of Tallow in the county Waterford.

Risteárd Mac Suibhne Uí Éire

Preface

Beloved Generations, these treasured mythologies in the making of Tallow and its surroundings are for you, and date from the third to the eight month of the fourth year into the 21st century of my era. They came into being in response to concerns that were foremost on my mind at the time. While many of these concerns are as old as humankind itself, some also it seems to me tend to be more exclusive to my own day.

Representative concerns include, for instance,

- nostalgia for the past
- forgotten civilizations
- secrets of sacred grounds
- items of love and affection
- sincerity of profound people
- visitors from beyond the clouds
- source of conflict and its solution
- ancestral connections and destinies
- dealing with grand scale temptation
- human behaviour that is beneath human dignity
- well-intentioned actions and practices which turn out not to be so beneficial for nature

Beloved Generations, like all my writings, *Generations Reaching* is being presented as a time barque for you the generations of our future, thence enabling you to know, and to come to appreciate the reflections and aspirations that one of your ancestors had, with respect to a sampling of life's eternal concerns while happily living simply and plainly with his wife and two children in a *21st century* of his era; happily living simply and plainly in a beautiful border village

that the people of his day called *Tallow*, on the lovely isle they called *Éire*, of the fragile planet they called *Earth*, of the solar system he called *Garden*, of the spiral galaxy they called *Milky Way*, of the thirty galaxies or more they called *Local Group*, of the beyond and beyond which he called *Horizon*, and of the that which they called *Great Universe*. Yet, I would have you know, that neither he nor they in all truth knew not what they were talking about, when they called the 'of the that' *Great Universe*.

Beloved Generations, consider the days of your old; the days of your ancient times, and we your ancestors. And may it be that in coming to know us, you not become in any way lowly discouraged, rather in many ways highly encouraged, and be inspired to go on to create songs of joy and sleeps of sound dreams for your own time and place, and for those of the times and places of these beyond.

Beloved Generations, in your readings and reflections on these following pages, be with the delight of knowing this: that all those decades, hundreds, and thousands and more of years ago, I was already with bringing you and your time to my mind. Take to sharing for the generations yet to come, your own reflections and aspirations on a sampling of life's eternal concerns, and of those that tend to be more exclusive to your own day. And with the generations and their time brought to your mind, let us in the continuum of our experiences be forever joyfully reaching on and on in our quest of understanding of what it means to be.

Beloved Generations, you our joyous, brave, noble, compassionate, aesthetic, ethical descendants we wish you well from our hearts, this time, this place, and want to assure you that in spirit, gene, and word we are already with you there, as verily are those who went before us already here.

Cherished Contemporaries, cordially, you are invited as honoured guests on board the exquisite *Time Barque of the Eternal Ocean* for its precious cargo to bethink for yourselves, and to bless before it sets sail from out of the bay of our own day. And be with the delight of knowing this: that we its trustworthy felicitous crew and captain, your blessings and admiration will in our hearts convey, and onwards safely of each new day, them bestow on the near and far generations of the unknown worlds.

Tallow
24th September 2007

Tallow (Gaeilge: Tulach an Iarainn)

The name Tallow wonderfully suggests the notion of life as consisting of highs and lows, ups and downs all-in-one like the Chinese *yinyang* concept of perfect harmony.

In Gaeilge the name means the 'hill concealing iron ore' which symbolically I have given it to mean, a sacred place of alchemy and transformation for those in search of the highest truths and values.

And as the tallow of the candle faithfully supports and yields to the wick that gives light, warmth, and beauty to the household, so too does the natural surroundings of Tallow lovingly support and yield to its inhabitants, by offering them opportunities in the world to be enlightened in their intentions, profound in their words, and honourable in their actions.

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Chapter **1** *A fragrance so lovely*

One sunny Saturday morning I was sweeping the footpath outside the front door of our house.
I was using a fine strong yard brush that I had bought down at Cunningham's the village hardware store.

As I was sweeping I was daydreaming.
And this is what I was dreaming.

"I am the Sun in the sky.
Truly I am the Sun and know nothing about any Human.
Then by somehow I find myself to be a Human.
Truly I am a Human and know nothing about any Sun."

With coming out of this daydream, I couldn't rightly say for sure whether I was a Human that had dreamt he was the Sun or the Sun that had dreamt it was a Human.

I thought to myself there must be some difference surely between being a Human and being the Sun.
Yet, do you know what?
I couldn't for the life of me say if I really knew what that difference might be.

Verily, I concluded that I am undergoing translations. Now I am the Sun, then here a Human, and there about Something else; continuously translating.

And then it came to me that everything then must be undergoing translations all of the time.

This thought made a whole lot of goodly sense to me. So I stopped the sweeping for a little while, and leant my oxter on the handle of the brush to look up at the sky that I may give that thought some further consideration.

Oh, I don't know for how long I was lost there in such fine contemplation, but didn't I find myself looking across the street at Kay's Flower shop.

Day after day she has it looking lovely; taking great care that the floral displays on the windows are always ahead of festive days such as Valentine's, Saint Patrick's, Daffodil and Mother's Day.

They often remind me of the classic 1960 movie "*The Time Machine*" in which the boutique across the street keeps changing with the times.

Trevor's Bridgestone Tyre Centre, that is also on the other side of the street was already open.

By the way Trevor is Kay's husband; a diligent and honest man.

I waved to Paul who works there in Bridgestone.

"Nice morning Paul?"
"It is indeed Richard."

Paul's wife Maeve had a baby girl last year.
I am very happy for them as this is their first child.
May they be with many more blessings.

The morning was quiet with the only sounds being of some happy crows gliding about playfully above the village. Bridgestone was quiet too.

You are not going to believe this, but suddenly a giant tyre; yes a giant tyre came rolling out the gate of Bridgestone all of its own accord!

It was like no tyre I had ever seen before or have ever seen since. Surely it was three and a half to four meters (twelve feet) in diameter and about a meter (three feet) in width. It reminded me of a tyre you might see on television on one of those super-sized trucks that they use in the copper mines in Chile.

Now most tyres, if not all to the best of my knowledge are coloured black, but this one was clearly coloured a mossy green. But there was something else too very unusual about it.

There was someone 'in' the tyre!
Yes, there was someone in there where the wheel would be and was rolling with it.

I couldn't believe my eyes, and I know you will find this hard to believe, but there sitting inside in the giant mossy green tyre was His Holiness Pope John XXIII who as you may know passed from this world one June evening back in 1963. I believe it was the evening of the 3rd June 1963.

I know you think that I must have been seeing things, but I am telling you, that sitting inside in that giant mossy green tyre, in the glorious morning sunshine was none other that His Holiness Pope John XXIII - Blessed Pope John XXIII since the 3rd September 2000.

He was dressed in full papal regalia and wearing a beehive style papal tiara with *fleurs-de-lis* patterns in it.

The giant tyre rolled out the gate and passed right in front of me and was heading for the square.
His Holiness didn't seem to be aware of my presence, but somehow I knew that I should follow on behind.

Upon reaching the square, it turned left at Hickeys Supermarket and started rolling out in the middle along Barrack Street.
It passed along by The Latch Restaurant, the AIB Bank and Michael A. O'Brien & Sons Auctioneers, before coming to a standstill in front of the Devonshire Arms Hotel.

There it turned right and headed towards the entrance to Hickeys' Flo Gas storage yard that is next door to the Post Office.

The gate to the yard, which is normally kept locked, opened all of its own accord. I saw the lock with my own eyes just open of itself, and fall to the ground.

A thought struck me as I was crossing the road, how very strange it was, that nobody in the street seemed to be aware of this giant mossy green tyre, with His Holiness inside it, passing along the street in front of them, and I alone following after it.

It rolled into the storage yard and I followed on behind. It was heading for the old churchyard that can be seen from the Mill Road.

I noticed there were cobblestones along the way as if there had once been some kind of an entrance here to the churchyard long ago.

Inside the overgrown neglected churchyard the giant tyre began rolling ever so slowly about some old foundation that was there in the grass by the old Protestant Church.

This beautiful old church with its windows of faces closed back in the early 1960's is now a dilapidated furniture-making place.
How very sad I thought.

As I was watching, I remembered having read somewhere, that there had once been a Catholic church on that very same spot that the tyre was now rolling about.

Suddenly!

The giant tyre stopped rolling about the foundation, and began to roll back instead out the same way it had entered the churchyard over the cobblestones.

Back out on the street it faced itself north and went along the street towards the square by Walsh's Drapery and J. Ryan's Meat & Eggs shop.

Now there were a number of people in the square going about their business, shopping, and chatting to each other, but to my absolute amazement, not one of them save diligent, good-natured Garda Michael Divine seemed to be aware of the existence of this giant mossy green tyre with a pope inside it

dressed in full papal regalia and wearing a beehive style papal tiara with *fleurs-de-lis* patterns in it, and I alone following after it.

Oh, it was all very strange, so it was, but somehow I thought it was normal, and so must have Garda Michael thought so, for he gave us a fine generous wave and a smile as we passed on by.

There in the square the giant tyre turned right, back into Chapel Street or East Street as I am inclined to call it at times, and along by Lizzy Langton's bar-lounge, and in front of Kay's Flower shop, Mary's H2O Hair Salon, our own house, Trevor's Bridgestone Tyre Centre and S. Twomey's abandoned Spirit Store.

As it was passing along by the house of neighbourly Catherine Oh Hallow, didn't she herself happen to be at that very moment standing at her door, and I could notice from the astonished expressions on her face that she was able to see this giant mossy green tyre with His Holiness inside in it.

I suddenly realised, that she was the only other person in the village along with Garda Michael and myself, who was given to beholding this most extraordinary scene.

"Oh, my God!
Oh, Hallow Sir?

Oh, Hallow, oh, my God Sir what's this?" she exclaimed.

"It's a great big mossy green tyre Catherine with His Holiness Pope John XXIII inside in it." said I.

I invited her to come follow along with me, but she just withdrew back inside her door and quickly closed it out.

As I moved on I could sense that she was looking out at the scene from behind the curtains of one of the upstairs windows.

It felt good to know that someone else in the village could also see this giant mossy green tyre with His Holiness inside in it, and I alone following after it.

And I was in that moment too with remembrances of having greeted her many the time here on East Street, and with having walked on along did hear in my background her speak unto herself, as she did oft so generously to a neighbour,

"Ah, he’s a lovely man; a lovely sunny man so he is. "

And in my heart I would always be with thanking Catherine Oh Hallow for such beautiful words and sentiments.

The giant tyre passed on in front of O'h-Ancoc's Drapery that has been closed for quite some time, and passed on in

front of John of Grace's Garage before it came to a standstill outside the gate of the Church of the Immaculate Conception.

I also like to call it the Church of the Lilies for it has many depictions of lilies of either being held by someone or in the wall or floor designs.

The giant tyre turned towards the church and then started doing the same thing as in the old churchyard on Mill Road; it started rolling around some rectangular area inside the main gate.

It was then I remembered having read somewhere, that there once stood in that spot an old thatched roofed church before the present church.
The present church dates from 1826.

Suddenly! It stopped rolling.

His Holiness got out of it and began to walk towards the church.

Now there are two white statues on either side of the main door of the church.

The one on the left is of Our Lady while the one on the right is of Saint Joseph her spouse.

The statue of Saint Joseph is in very good condition. He is holding some lilies in his right hand.

The statue of Our Lady who is standing on an orb of the world with a waxing moon in the background, however is damaged, in that four fingers on her left hand are incomplete while the thumb and little finger on her right are also incomplete.
A suffering snake is stuck beneath her left foot.

An amazing thing happened as His Holiness was approaching the door.

Our Lady's fingers on both hands completely restored themselves, and the suffering snake became a twig that was blown away by a gentle easterly breeze.

The double doors of the church opened of their own accord before him.

I followed on behind, and as I was passing by the giant mossy green tyre, didn't it disappear right there before my eyes and without leaving a trace.

His Holiness paused inside the door to bless himself from the old marble holy water font in the wall at the back of the church.

According to our parish priest, the Reverend Michael Farrell that font may have belonged to the old thatched roof church that once stood at the entrance to the present church. It has got a nice design with three flowering white lilies beneath the bowl.

His Holiness then went down on his two knees and bowed towards the altar.

Rising to his feet he began to slowly walk along the central aisle.

He neither looked to the left nor to the right but straight ahead.

Beneath the gold-crowned lighted sacristy lamp he again brought himself down to his knees, and bowed towards the altar; towards the tabernacle.

I found myself kneeling on the left hand side of the aisle next to the statue of Saint Anthony of Padua.

For a long time His Holiness prayed there on his knees. It sounded as if he was praying alternatively in Latin and Italian.

My eyes were brought to look up at the lovely coloured windows to the far left of the altar.

I began to notice that the figures of the holy saints in the coloured glass windows were beginning to move out from their places, and to walk down through the air to where His Holiness was kneeling in prayer.

First to move and walk down was Saint Ita. She was followed by Saint Attracta, Saint Carthaigh, Saint Brigid, Saint Patrick, Saint Columbkille, and lastly by Blessed Oliver Plunkett - Saint Oliver Plunkett since the 12th October 1975.

It was a most wondrous sight to behold.
And I noticed also that the painted-over ceiling was now displaying many beautiful frescoes.

And although I could no longer see their happy faces, for they were all now kneeling with their backs to me, I felt they were smiling in prayer, and so happy to be in the company of His Holiness.

I too became aware of myself praying in my heart.
What words I used I have no recollection, but I know I was with sacred words on my lips praying.

A fragrance of sweetness filled the air; a fragrance so lovely the likes of which no flower not even the fairest lily could send forth.

As we were softly praying in the beautiful solemnity of the sunlit church, I noticed something moving out of the corner of my right eye.

I turned and got a terrible fright!
A terrible fright I got!

I saw this figure, which must have been almost three meters (ten feet) in height and all clothed in a black cowled cloak that went all the way to the ground and was trailing behind.

I could see no face, but what really struck me was how black, how very very black was that cloak. It was a black that was disturbingly black, so it was. It felt like I was looking into a pitched dark coal shed that was constantly retreating and advancing at the same time.
I knew somehow that there was definitely something not right here.

The Black Cowled Cloak was carrying a net and was holding it in a way as if about to cast it on a shoal of fish in a calm and peaceful lagoon or throw it over a shepherd who is out searching in a starry night for a lost sheep.

Then with my heart panting I realised that he, she, it or whoever it was, was going to cast that net over His Holiness and his companions.

I said to myself, "I must do something!
And I must do it quickly!"

It was then I noticed that I still had my yard brush with me.

I moved over along between the pews, and took one almighty swipe at the Black Cowled Cloak!

In that very instant; in that very instant he, she, it or whoever it was vanished net and all.

His Holiness and his companions didn't even seem to be aware of the danger they had been in nor what had just taken place directly behind them, for no one from amongst them turned around.

After a while His Holiness rose to his feet.

Each of his companions with calm lovely smiles returned to their respective places in the church.

His Holiness advanced up towards the beautiful gold embroidered statue of Our Lady that stands immediately to the right of the altar, by the sacristy door, and kissed her right foot and then her left.

She was smiling softly down at him, and gave to him a bunch of lilies that she had been holding in her left hand.
For a long time they stayed in private conversation with each other.

As I was watching this beautiful scene, I noticed Blessed Pope John XXIII slowly evanescenting.

With leaving my sight I saw him turn about, and he gave to me one of his beautiful characteristic smiles.
Then I could no longer see him.

I felt a tremendous serenity in my heart and a wondrous peace in the church.

I went over to the statue of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux that is near the baptismal font and there I lit a candle for His Holiness' intentions.

As I was praying there, I became aware of this beautiful fragrance of fresh roses.
Oh, it was lovely, so it was.

And the following words came before my mind:

"May Thy priests be faithful guardians of Thy Church, as John was of Mary, whom he received into his house."

On my way down the side aisle, I stopped to say a prayer before the statue of Saint Anthony, and while doing so I became aware of this beautiful fragrance of fresh lilies.
Oh, it was lovely, so it was.

And with making my lingering way down to the main door the following words came before my mind:

"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:
And yet I say unto you, that even King Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

As I was leaving the church grounds, I somehow felt the urge to sweep up the old bits papers and things from around the gateway.

I noticed John of Kindness on the other side coming down from one of the shops up the street with some milk and bread for his family.

John's house is almost in front of the church gate.
At Christmas time it is the prettiest decorated house in all of Chapel Street.

"Morning John?"
"Morning Richard?"
"A lovely morning it is, isn't it?"

"It is indeed Richard.
Richard are you in need of any blocks for the fire these days? I have a grand trailer of them there below, if you would like them."

"That would be great John."

"I'll drop them up to you sometime in the afternoon so Richard."

"Great. Thanks John. I'll be ready."

John has the best blocks around and always at a very reasonable price too.
But more than the getting of the blocks, I enjoy chatting with him when he brings them up.
He has many stories to tell.

John of Kindness is surely one of the soundest people I know.
John of Grace being another.

I strolled away up the sunny street, and was going inside our own door when I heard the Church of the Lilies' bell ringing out for the noon hour Angelus.

There is something wonderful about a bell ringing that calls people to stop whatever they are doing at that very moment to thank, reflect, and even to pray for a few minutes.

I love listening in the evenings to the six o'clock Angelus bell on RTÉ 1 and from time to be watching the little film showing the people up and down the island pausing to listen to it.

Strange it is, however, for none of them bless themselves with hearing the sound of the bell or even move their lips in prayer.
Perhaps they are praying in their hearts.

Well, that there is the story of what happened to me one lovely sunny Saturday morning, when I was sweeping the footpath outside the front door of our house.

I don't know what I would have done if I hadn't had the yard brush with me at that moment in the church.
Sometimes I think about it.

Annotations:

daydreaming - Inspired by the story of Chuang Chou dreaming that he was a butterfly; Chapter II of the Chinese classic: *The Chuang-Tzu*

Consider the lilies of the field ... - From the Holy Gospel according to Saint Matthew, Chapter 6, verses 28, 29

> "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, that even King Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

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~ ~ ~ ~ ≈ *sailing on* ♪

Chapter **2** *A new day surely*

You know how it is when your are reading something on the local history of a place, and you come across a reference that is so interesting that it leads you to go out and check it for yourself.

And you know how it is too when you get there, and you find something else totally unexpected; something that is not in the written word at all. Well that is exactly what happened to me this passed week.

If what we discover is something wonderful then we are filled with joy and are very thankful.
I didn't find something wonderful.
On the contrary, something far removed from anything wonderful; something that had given me quite some bother I can tell you.

I was doing some reading on a local tower castle, more accurately a tower house built between 1450 and 1500 by one of the Earls of Desmond. The castle in question is located on a promontory at the eastern entrance to the pretty village of Conna, in the Barony of Kinnatalloon.
Access to it is through a beautiful woodland.

I often stroll around that castle grounds for it is built in a very scenic spot.

Away off to the far north you can see the second highest mountain on the island, Galtee Mór with a height of some 920 meters (3018 feet), and to the northeast the Knockmealdown with a height of some 795 meters (2609 feet).

The castle is partially surrounded by beautiful Scots Pine trees on its northern and eastern faces.
It is a peaceful place all year round.

But like any other Norman castle up and down the length and breath of the island, it has a history that records much tragedy. Now I'm not, however going into such tragedies here, as that is not what I want to be talking about, save to mention one.

I was reading away one evening last week about how the castle had changed hands a number of times, when I came across a reference to three girls who had lost their lives there back in 1653 when the interior of the castle was deliberately set on fire.

If you were to see the castle yourself, you would know that there is no escape out of it, other than by means of its one and only door which is located on the eastern face or perhaps down the garbage shoot which is on the northern face or one

other alternative which is no alternative at all, and that would be to jump off the top down into the bawn or into the Bride River which meanders about below its western and northern faces.

The image of being trapped by fire in a 26-meter (85-foot) high stone fortress, with hostile forces below in the bawn, shouting up threats and insults at you, is absolutely terrifying.

The three girls were Avis, Joanna, and Jane and they where sisters. How old they were at the time, I was not able to establish from that reading.

There was an intriguing reference however to an inscription recording the calamity on a monument in a nearby church.
Now what was meant here by 'a monument' I had no way of knowing.

Was it a headstone or some special sort of commemorative stone, I could not discern from the reading alone.

There was nothing for it but to head off out and search for it myself.
I would have to find that church and to read the inscription with my own eyes.

Of an afternoon, I set out in a westerly direction in search of this church.
I had a good idea of where to commence my search.

Upon arriving at the lovely hamlet of Aghern, in the Barony of Kinnatalloon, I found in this picturesque setting an old church with its cemetery full to the last.
I noticed how the place was being very well maintained.

I looked up over the main door that used to be (which by the way is now all blocked up) at the date on which the church was built.
It is recorded there as AD 1816.
I concluded this church was too young.

The church is still in use, and the main door now is located on the northern side, and it is always kept locked during the week.

I went round to the back of the cemetery into a farmyard to make some inquires. There, a young man who was helping someone else to repair the roof of an out shed, kindly directed me to another cemetery.
I thanked him and continued on my way to search for the monument with the inscription on it.

It was a lovely afternoon for this kind of fieldwork.

Very soon I found the location spoken of by the young man.
Now I cannot mention here the name of that church, for reasons that will be making themselves clearer as I go along with my story.
With me with patience and understanding be.

I found this church or what was left of it to be in a terrible state of ruin.
A packed cemetery surrounded it.
And I mean packed.
This cemetery must have been used for generations upon generations.

I was shocked to see the condition of both the church and the cemetery.
For some reason, and I don't know why, but I had imagined that the church would still be in some kind of fair condition.
But far from it was the truth.

If you were to circle about on high as the crow flys and go visit the church of Saint Luke's of Knockmourne, which by the way is also in the Barony of Kinnatalloon, and compare the two structures, you would know what I mean when I say, that the former was in a terrible state of ruin.

Not alone was it in such a state, but it seemed to me to have been originally very poorly constructed out of ditch stones

rather than cut stones as in the case of main body of Saint Luke's. The bell tower of the latter however has very few cut stones. That is a whole other story that I may come back to at another time.

The church of the former with the packed cemetery was without any roof and had no bell tower. The walls were laid bare and not a windowpane was there to be seen.

Seemingly the walls were built in a fashion that I have rarely seen in other churches, in that the gable ends where built separately from the sidewalls.

In other places, and for the most part all are built into each other to make a single structure.

What I noticed also was that the interior of the church itself was much lower than the surrounding cemetery.

The church was built from east to west.
And I entered from the east.
The sun was shinning in on me from the southwest.

The interior was covered with rubble and undergrowth. I looked at the walls and felt saddened by their destitute condition.

However, I was not prepared for what I saw next.

So, be with preparing yourself, for what I am about to say is not all admirable.

First, I noticed what appeared to be a chrome or brass handle attached to a board that was well weathered. The handle was partially rusted, and do you know what, I was looking down at it, and for a moment I didn't know what it was I was really looking at.

Then I could recognize what it really was that I was looking at!
Yes.
Yes, it was the side of a coffin, just thrown there in the undergrowth.

After a few moments of pulling myself together, I began to cautiously look about me, and didn't I notice other bits and pieces of boards also thrown about here and there.
They were all of the same material and most likely if not even without a doubt of the one and the same coffin.

From that moment on, I became very conscious that there might be other things too lying about my feet that I might not like at all to be seeing.

And sure enough, wasn't I right in my conclusion. There before me were a number of human bones scattered about on the rubble, and sticking out of the undergrowth.

I felt a … in fact; I don't know what I felt, other than I felt the need to be very respectful; respectful of the dead.

I very carefully stepped up out of the church through the western opening, and stood there in the sunlight for quite some time reflecting on what I had just seen and been through.

I looked to my left, and noticed a small rectangular headstone sticking up out of the ground, having not a single word carved on it other than, two large letters 'N' 'P' carved near the top.

After awhile I got the courage to look around the cemetery, and horrified I was to discover so many freshly dug rabbit burrows.
With my every step they disappeared in different directions, with many of them taking to the safety of their underground caverns.

I looked at many very old headstones even dating as far back as 1775.
But there were as many again that were totally illegible.

There were also a number of 20th century headstones here and there among them.

I felt very disheartened, and now when I think back on it, I believe I may very well have been in a mild state of shock.

I left the place with not having found what I had originally come looking for. That search would now have to be resumed another day, and even perhaps in another place.

I went to the tower castle that I mentioned earlier, and stayed there for a long while lost in pain weightfull thought with looking out towards the Knockmealdowns through the beautiful Scots Pine trees.

Later that evening back home, the events of the afternoon began to slowly play on my mind.
I began to feel angry that people would have left their cemetery, however old it was, to deteriorate to that level: desecration by neglect it was.

Then I began to reflect, what if it had been in a cemetery where my ancestors were buried, and I happened to come upon some human bones in the undergrowth, how would I feel, I asked myself.
I know exactly how I would feel.

I would be desperately upset so I would.
I would no doubt run to the local priest, and get him to have the bones reburied with all the rites originally bestowed upon them re-bestowed upon them.

I would probably complain like mad to the local County Council, and mostly likely would go as far as venting my

shock, dismay, and disappointment in the local newspapers such as *The Avondhu* and even in a national newspaper such as the *Irish Examiner*, so I would.
Oh, I would be upset all right, I would.

With such troublesome thoughts the night carried me to bed.

But then, didn't I have great difficulty falling asleep, not so much over what I had seen in the afternoon, but rather that people of this sacred island; some of my own native people had seemingly lost their respect for their deceased.

I reasoned to myself, that if they were respectful of the living they would be respectful of the dead.
If they were respectful of their dead, they would appreciate more fully their life and their freedom.

After a lot of twisting and turning, and sitting up and lying down sleep eventually found me.

Do you think it stopped there?
Well, no it didn't.
In my dreams I was even more bothered and troubled than when I awake.

Would you believe it, if I told you that twisting and turning, and sitting up and lying down would have been

preferred to the kind of dream; no the kind of nightmare that I was having that night?

I was dreaming that someone woke me up who wanted me to get up, and go down stairs, and out into the backyard. Can you imagine it?

Dressed in nothing but my pyjamas, I went down stairs and out the back door.
In a moment I was up in the moonlit sky.
Yes, up in the moonlit night sky I was.
And I was a huge bird.

I was rising way up high above the house and above the village before I began to flap my wings.
I was flying in a northerly direction, and in what seemed like no time at all, I was gliding in to alight on Galtee Mór.
I looked about in all directions, and could see very far for so bright was the night.

In a moment, it was daylight, and I found myself walking along some roads of the isle.
I was no longer a huge bird, but my ordinary self as I am now.

And as I was walking along, many people were running and rushing out passed me.

I could see as far as the distant hills on either side that others also were running across fields and brooks in their

hundreds, like the time when His Holiness Pope John Paul II visited the island back in the autumn of 1979. They were running then along the roads and in the fields and across the brooks to Drogheda and Galway.
And didn't I remember this when I dreaming.

Anyway in the dream, the people all seemed to be very anxious to reach some particular place up ahead.
I asked a few where everyone was going, and they said to see a Great Circus.
I thought it a bit strange that people were so excited about wanting to go to see a circus.

I've never had any great liking for circuses myself.
When I was a little boy, I once walked out in the middle of a circus act as I couldn't bear to be watching lovely white horses been hit.
My mother found me crying in the grass.

In the dream, I arrived in this large market square where there were tens of thousands of people gathered.
And there were rows and rows of fast food stalls, and people were queuing up to buy some refreshments.
Everybody was very excited about something, and were pointing in three directions and proclaiming through shouts and yells,

"They're coming!

They're coming!
Look, they're coming!"

Off in the distance, I could see approaching from three different directions, three long convoys accompanied by many people who appeared to be doing all kinds of contortions.
I felt however, that there was something very unnatural about them.

Before I knew what was happening they were entering the square.

The first to enter were those who seemed liked aged high priests carrying menorahs and scrolls and chanting as they entered.

Now, what I am going to be telling you next is going to shock you, so be with preparing yourself.

Following in the wake of those menorah and scroll carriers were what seemed like hundreds of goats that had something like red ink spattered on their heads.
Right behind them - you're going to find this hard to believe, but there were several individuals stoning batches of helpless people.

The spectators were delighted.
I was shocked.

They were delighted at seeing people being stoned to death.

At that moment, the second convoy entered the square with hundreds of men beating their scarlet chests hysterically. They were followed by hundreds of sheep that were being slaughtered before the crowd.

Right behind them - you're going to find this hard to stomach, but there were several individuals … almost it is too hard for me to say, but there were several individuals with swords who were dismembering and even decap … scores of people.

The spectators were loudly cheering with excitement.
I was shocked.
They were delighted at seeing innocent sheep being slaughtered and human beings being …

I wanted to get away, away, away as far as possible from that horrible square, and all those strange people, but somehow I could not move.

There in a moment, came the third convoy being lead by riders on horses.
Some were carrying crucifixes, like they would spears, while as many again were carrying just plain crosses.

Everybody in the square moved away back out of their way.

Following in their wake was a spectacle that makes me shiver with fear to be even talking about it.
I may not be able to tell you every detail, but I will go as far as I can.

First, were brought into the square, several hundred incorrupt bodies of members of their factions who had long since passed away from this world.
These were followed by trailers piled high with bleached human bones.

Suddenly, and for a moment, I found myself standing back in the old church ruin of the afternoon before, and looking down aghast at the white bones which I had seen there on the rubble and sticking out of the undergrowth.
Then in a moment, I was back again in the square.

The spectators seemed to be restless with the incorrupt bodies and the trailers of bleached bones.
They wanted something more interesting; some more gripping and exciting.

Autos-da-fe!
There must have surely been seventy to a hundred of them and they all burning away at the same time.

The air was filled with an unusual odour that was absolutely, at least for me, to be absolutely sickening.

The spectators surged forward hooting and jeering at those enveloped in the flames.
And I could notice that the eyebrows on many of them were being singed with getting too close, for so eager were they to be watching close up the agony of another being burnt to death.

A thought from out of nowhere came me at that deeply disturbing sight, and I wondered to myself, if it was not something like this too in the infamous Cork city market place on those terrible Saturday mornings not so very many decades ago.

Soon the lustful spectators became restless too with the autos-da-fe.
They wanted something more interesting; some more gripping and exciting.

Then there was a sudden silence.
This was a silence that felt like it had a pounding heart beat all of its own.

Then into that square were led on leashes this couple who must have been no more than thirty to thirty-five years old.

Besides the crude leashes about their necks were tied two weathered boards with initials carved in them.
Hers read 'M M' and his 'J N' and were possibly the initials of their names or even place of origin or even both.

While I was considering this, the ones on the horseback with crucifixes and crosses, to the great delight of the spectators, ordered others from among their own to mercilessly flagellate the couple with barbed … I can't …

Please understand here now, I can't say the words for so horrendous was their treatment of them, and I can't even begin to tell you what they did to that couple besides flagellating them.

By sundown the once couple where beyond all recognition, I'm telling you; they were not recognisable as humans any more.
I can't continue … It was awful.

Beyond any words that could be fashioned was the homicidal lust of that huge crowd of spectators; beyond any words was the extent to which those three convoys were willing to go to fully satisfy that lust.
Lust lustfully feeding on lust.

I ran and ran away away from that square of horror.

I ran and ran away to a quiet place, and there I cried and cried for the way the world had let itself fall to such a low level of existence.

Five thousand years of brutality, only brightened here and there by a few rare moments of dignity came flooding before my eyes.

Did the dream stop there?
I tell you it didn't, for in a moment, didn't I find myself standing on the bridge over the Bride River at the northern entrance to the sacred village of Tallow, in the Barony of Coshmore and Coshbride.

I didn't know why I was there, but I was standing in the middle of the bridge and facing north.

Then I heard the sounds of chanting, shouting and horseshoes.

I noticed coming along the road from the west this troop of people carrying what seemed to be candles and manuscripts, and there seemed to be goats or sheep following on behind them.

And from the north down the hill road were coming a troop of people who seemed to be hysterically beating at their chests, and behind them seemed to be many sheep or goats.

I couldn't so easily distinguish between them.

Along the road from the east down The Sweep came these mounted riders on horseback, and carrying with them what seemed to be crucifixes or crosses, and behind them seem to be a whole lot of people being carried on what looked like stretchers.

I was trying to make sense of what I was seeing when all three troops came and converged at the intersection of the roads before me, and in a moment they began to turn and advance as one body right towards me.

I don't know why, but I didn't feel any fear.
I just stood my ground.

They demanded that I let them pass over the bridge as they wanted to enter the sacred village of Tallow to present a pageant.
I refused to let them pass.

They became furious and were about to run me down, I tell you, when I felt this arrowhead burning its way through my back and puncturing my heart.

I turned to see who the Archer was that had taken upon him or herself to be so generous to the triad forces that be.
But I could not see clearly, for oh, ...!

Oh, the pain was excruciating!
I tried, I tried to cry out,
'Thought me a scorpion did you?
No scorpion am I.
I'm …'
but oh, before I …!
Oh, the pain was consuming!

I stumbled to the side and fell over the western battlement of the bridge.
I seemed to be forever falling, falling and falling even though the bridge is not so high.

There was a great splash, and in a moment didn't I find myself to be a beautiful speckled trout making my way in the pristine waters of the Bride River.

I woke up with this great sense of peace, but then no sooner was I beginning to appreciate it, when memories of the terrible nightmare began to visit me.
I pondered how it ought to be interpreted.

Looking towards the bedroom window, I could see it was already dawning outside.

I sat for a long time on the side of the bed before getting up.
It was a new day and I was in it.

I said to myself, the first thing I must do is to get in contact with the parish priest in whose care that neglected cemetery is located, and hope that he will immediately take proper care of it as is well befitting the honour of the dead, and the respect of the living.

It would however be after supper of the next day before I could reach him on the telephone.
He was very calm, courteous, understanding and thankful, and said that he would see to it immediately.
I felt a great load had been lifted off my mind.

And do you know, it was a hard thing for me to be doing to be calling a gentlemanly priest like him, and to be telling him the likes of which I have spoken of here, concerning my discovery in the nave to that church in ruin.

But it had to be done, for isn't it all a part of being a member of the human family?
We've all got to be kindly looking out for each other, the community, and the country, even the great wide world, and to do it now more than ever before.

We've got to be learning as much as we can from the errors of history, for if an individual in a community and communities themselves don't try to actively learn from their own local history, and world history, they are surely by default intentionally repeating it over and over again.

Coming back to the morning of the day before, I travelled over into the Barony of Fermoy to paint the beautiful wooden Celtic 'IHS' cross that marks my own father's neatly maintained grave, for won't the anniversary of his returning into the surrounding be with us in a few days time.

My true-shepherd father Risteárd Mac Suibhne (1923-1985) was originally a native of Baile Mhúirne, in the Barony of West Muskerry - Baile Mhúirne a name that means 'the home or the place of The Beloved.'

In the morning breeze playfully dancing about there, didn't I hear in his soft noble voice these precious words,

"Richie, timely effort will be timely rewarded."

And thereupon a great peace welled up in my heart.
I gave the painting brush some repose, and looked up at the vast floating sky.
It was a new day surely, and I was in it.
How good that felt.

Annotations:

Baile Mhúirne - from Gaeilge meaning, 'the home or the place of The Beloved' - Ballyvourney

The following letter was carried in *The Avondhu* dated, Thursday the 8th April 2004 with the title 'An insult to nature' which was given to it by the Editor.

Dear Editor,

Soft April showers are encouraging life forth in the fields, hedgerows and trees. We have dug the gardens and ploughed the fields, fertilized them and sown the myriad seeds but it is not we who are making them grow.

Is there a greater love than this that life is being so freely given to us and without injury or force? At Easter time we may say that we are celebrating the gift of new life being gently and beautifully given to us for the very first time. Yet, why is that this year our attention is being deliberately turned away from this given love towards something that is totally unnatural and strange to our experience of life as we known here on the isle?

We have oft been told that unless a seed dies, it remains just a single seed but that if it dies, it bears much fruit. How can this be? Shouldn't it be rather that because a seed lives there is life; life giving life to life and giving it without any intended injury?

What parent, gardener or farmer among us takes to planting dead seeds and expects from them to come forth living seeds? From living seeds come forth living seeds.

Yet, we are being told that to celebrate Easter we must cast aside that which is truly natural and beautiful for us to believe in for something that is not. And that which is not, is tomorrow being brought to the southern bank of the beautiful Blackwater and right into the cherished Fermoy Community Youth Centre.

This movie* is an insult to nature, to humanity and as such it is not for the eyes of those who are in harmony with the ways of the child in their

womb, the flowers in their gardens and the seeds in their fields, however highly spoken of it is in the media or even recommended by those who have been given the privileged responsibility of being our spiritual guides.

There was a time and that time was not so very long ago when our forbearers were rounded up and forced to watch in market places things that no human being should ever have to go through or be asked to watch.

While the southern bank of the Blackwater has to endure for this coming week the presence of this outrage, something wonderful is taking shape only a few hundred meters up river on its northern bank. Yes, a library of rare books is budding forth in lovely Castlehyde.

Can there be anything more wonderful in the home than shelves of fine books? Can there be anything more wonderful in the community than a well-stocked library?

Today a library of rare books, tomorrow who knows there may also be an art gallery of rare paintings or even a planetarium and astronomy museum. We have got to think big.

Let us this Easter thankfully celebrate the living seeds; the living seeds in our families, our communities, our gardens and fields, and above all the living seeds in our inner ground. And let us celebrate fine books for they contain the living seeds of our heritage.

Blessings of Easter!

Cordially,

Risteárd Mac Suibhne

* *The Passion of The Christ* (i.e. the uncut version released in 2004, and having a 15PG rating for Ireland)

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Chapter **3** *A wedding gift*

It was morning time, and I was out for a walk on my own.

With turning the corner at Glenbower Veterinary, I found myself to be in the presence of the magnificent magnolia tree there that these days is in full bloom.

This magnolia that grows out over the garden wall is the largest of its kind in the village.
It is so beautiful, graceful and elegant.

I stood under it and looked up through it at the blue-white sky.
Oh, it was all beauty in fragrance.

In that very moment, my thoughts drifted effortlessly away to the beautiful city of Jeddah, on the Red Sea, and to a time when I used to be living there on my own, and my family were back here in Éire.

Jeddah or more correctly Jaddah is the largest city in Arabia's Western Province.

It is a vital port for trade, and the main gateway through which most of the pilgrims arrive by air and sea who travel to Makkah Al-Mukkaramah and Al-Madinah Al-Munawarah.

It was a Wednesday morning soon after sunrise, and I was driving passed the beautiful Blue-Domed Mosque that is built out on the sea.
It is also called the Mosque on Stilts and the Island Mosque.

Often I have walked along here in the evening time about Maghreb, when the sun is setting. Maghreb is the time for evening prayer. Many come there to pray.
Especially, I like coming here on Friday evenings as it marks the end of the weekend.

I sit on this white bench and watch the sun set in the sea, and all the people making their way out along the arched colonnade to the main part of the mosque. It is a lovely scene as everybody looks very happy.

As is their belief and custom, the women wear long black *abaayas* and the men long white *thobes*.
And many of them bring their children with them.

I remember this one Friday evening sitting there on the bench, and this elderly, dignified, shy Arabian man of regular build and height came along on my left and sat down beside me.

He was dressed in traditional Bedouin attire, had a fine beard and wore his hair long.
He was of the fragrance of musk an' rose.

I stood up out of respect for an elderly person.
He smiled and gently shook my hand.
His hand felt like high quality silk.

We both sat down together and there in silent harmony watched the sun set into the sea.
Then he said to me,

"It pleases Allah to give us all this beauty."

I smiled in agreement, and replied with,

"It is how we read it."

With the muezzin calling out for prayers he smiled at me and rose to his feet, and went and entered the holy mosque.

I watched him from the bench as he made his way out along the colonnade.

The memory of his words, the softness of his voice, the beauty of his smile, the touch of his hand, the dignity of his person and the fragrance of his presence will always be with me.

It was a Wednesday morning soon after sunrise, and I was driving in my beautiful white starship passed the Blue-Domed Mosque. I was heading south along the Corniche, that is the coast road, towards Al-Balad which is really the heart of Jeddah.

While admiring the many wonderful open-air sculptures along the way, wasn't I accompanied for a stretch by a school of playful white dolphins.

These sculptures are full of variety and some of them are astoundingly beautiful.
Perhaps my favourite one would be the 'Four Arabian Lamps' especially in the dawn or at nighttime.
There is something mysteriously beautiful about them.

I passed the Jeddah Museum of Science and Technology on my left, and I could see off to my right Jeddah Fountain rising to a height of some 260 meters (853 feet) from its great golden bokhour pot by Al-Salam Royal Palace.
It was like a great white sail being gently touched by the wind.

Passing on along by the fish market, and I could see the mosques and buildings of Al-Balad.

Al-Balad is a wondrous place to stroll about after Mahgreb, for everybody is in a very happy mood.
This is particularly so in front of the Al-Shafee Mosque.

All the shops have again reopened after having been shut for the evening prayer that usually takes about twenty minutes.
The air is playful with all the enchanting aromas of spices, coffees and perfumes.

There is a place in Al-Balad that makes really great shawermas. A shawerma contains thinly sliced lamb, chicken or beef with pickles, salad, french-fries and all rolled up in freshly baked Arabic bread.
It is delicious!

Oh, how very interesting it is too to be walking along the gold souq. It is beautiful like being in an extraordinary cave with all the lights switched on.
Everybody is friendly and seems to be so very happy that you have come to look about.

Should you stop awhile to view some items, you are encouraged to sit down and to enjoy some chat over a scalding glass of hot sweet tea, known as shai.
The drinking of shai, believe me, is an art to be mastered.

Driving on a little bit further south beyond Al-Balad with having Jeddah Islamic Port and its 132 meter (433 feet) high impressive Marine Tower on my right, I'm now out into the outskirts of the city, and have reached my place of work where I will remain until mid-afternoon.

The drive to work takes me about an hour which means that I have to leave home about half passed five in the morning.

I like to travel along the Corniche on my way to work, and take the desert road on my way home.

With the day over, I bade farewell to everyone for the weekend, and headed off home northwards on the Makkah-Madinah Expressway.
I always liked driving home on the Wednesdays as it was the last day of the week, and usually I was feeling very tired.

There is a huge difference between the coast road and the desert road.
The former meanders away and there are only two lanes, a crawling lane and a slow lane.
Everybody really takes their time along it, whereas the latter is a straight four-lane expressway in which everybody feels the need be driving as if one were driving a Concorde.
The speed is unbelievable.

The cars and four-wheel drives are huge compared to what we drive here in Éire and they control the two fast outside lanes.
There is an endless stream of old trucks pounding their way along in the two inside slower lanes.

All along the side of the expressway are concrete triangular shaped barriers that are no more than a meter in height.
Nobody in his or her right mind would consider walking along the expressway.

Anyway, coming back to my story, I was happily driving along with my 3-litre V6 engine purring away beneath the bonnet.
I was in the second outside lane, that is the second fastest lane, and was comfortably clocking about 160 kph (100 mph) when there was this sudden bang, and the car started to go out of control!
I tightly grabbed the steering wheel, threw on the emergency light switch, and because it was an automatic applied the brake as carefully as I could without causing the car to flip over.

Somebody must have been watching over me that day as I was able to bring the car across the lanes, and managed to bring it to a safe stop by the concrete barriers.

I turned off the engine and sat there in the car for a moment trying to pull myself together.

It was with great reluctance that I got out of the car to see what had happened.

The tyre on the back wheel on my side, that is the left hand side, had all but completely come free of the rim.
There were bits and pieces of rubber scattered all back along the road.
The smell of burning rubber filled the air.

There was no gas station in either direction to be seen nor neither did I have a mobile phone at that time.
There was nothing for it now but for me to change the wheel myself.

I was wearing a white shirt and the afternoon was very hot.
Surely it must have been in the mid-thirties Celsius.
I rolled up my sleeves and carefully removed my watch and placed it on my seat with my tie.

I went around to the booth, got out the jack and wheel brace and proceeded there on the open highway to change the wheel.
The sweat was pouring off me.
The wheel nuts felt as if they were welded in place, and the wheel brace itself was almost too hot to handle.

You have no idea of how scary it was to be down there changing the wheel with my back almost out over the yellow margin line, for such was the narrowness of the hard shoulder all along that stretch.

Every beat of my heart was accompanied by the pounding of the trucks roaring down passed me.

I eventually got the wheel changed.
The sweat was rolling off me, but I had the wheel changed, and that was all that mattered then.
I could always have a shower when I got home.

I drove along at a very moderate speed to the first gas station I met.
There I checked the air pressure on all four tyres and drove on for they had no means to change tyres at that particular station.

I drove home by way King Abdul Aziz International Airport.
I could see in the distance its architecturally unique Haj terminal.
It looked like so many lovely white tents all nestled together.

Eventually, I reached the Corniche, and the sight of the blue sparking waters with fishes of many kinds swimming in the waves greatly lifted my spirits.

Yet at that very same moment, didn't I suddenly miss having my wife there with me, for we used to enjoy strolling arm in arm along the seashore early in the morning on the

weekends, watching all the colourful fishes swimming along in the waves.
It was a precious and lovely time for us, so it was.

I drove on to the local garage near where I lived and bought a new tyre.
With arriving home I took my bag, books, watch and tie out of the car. I had a good shower and then took a nap for about an hour or so.

I got up and made my evening meal after which I went out for a stroll in the cool of the evening. Beneath the stars I gave thanks for having been brought home safe and sound.
I went away to bed early and slept soundly.

Next morning after breakfast, I decided to do the weekly grocery shopping as I normally do.
I use to like to shop in the Danube hypermarket that is located at the intersection of Hera Street and Madinah Road or sometimes in the Jeddah International Market at the junction of Madinah Road and Tahlia Street.

Doing the weekly grocery shopping amounted to a social event, for it was a great time to slow down and chat with people I hadn't seen all week.

With browsing about and chatting, and even taking time out to sit down and enjoy a refreshing fruit cocktail drink, three hours would have nicely drifted themselves by.

I was all set to go and very much looking forward to it, when I went down into the bedroom to get my watch.
I usually kept it on my bedside locker.
I put it on my wrist, but I noticed that the little clip that clasps it shut was missing.
I checked all about the room but I could not find it.

Then I checked my workbag, pockets, shoes, tie, and even the pages of my books, but I couldn't find it there either.

I said to myself that it must be out in the car for I had left the watch there with my tie on my seat the day before while changing the wheel.

I went out and checked every inch of the interior of the car, but the clip was nowhere to be found.

I came back inside and felt very down in myself for that watch was a precious wedding gift from my wife.

I concluded that there was only one thing for me to do, and that was to go down to Al-Balad and buy a new clip.
I would tell her what happened and she would understand.
Yet, sadness was filling my heart.

I was thinking along such lines when I heard the faint familiar voice of my friend Dependable within me say,

"Rich it's on the expressway. Go out and get it."

I know you're going to think I was a small bit crazy, but didn't I believe and put my trust in those soft gently spoken words, for let me tell you, my friend Dependable has never left me down.

I set off in my beautiful white starship to search for the missing gold clip of the expensive gold watch that my wife had given to me as a wedding gift.

The grocery shopping, chatting, and the drinking of a refreshing fruit cocktail would all have to wait till later in the day.

As I was driving along, I found myself praying not so much that I would find the clip, but rather that I would be able to return home safe and sound.
I knew I was going to be placing myself in a very dangerous environment.

Out on the Makkah-Madinah Expressway the driving scene was as chaotic and as hectic as on any other day.

I drove southwards for about thirty-five kilometers (twenty miles) before taking a slip road, and doing a u-turn that brought me back on to the expressway again.

I was now driving in a northerly direction and I was having difficulty trying to remember where exactly I had stopped the afternoon before to change the wheel.

For the life of me, I couldn't remember the exact spot or even recognise the general area, for all along the road looked the same to me; an endless concrete barrier of sameness.

I was about to give up, and started moving out into the faster lanes when in the second fastest lane I heard the same soft gentle voice of Dependable say unto me,

"Pull over here, Rich."

I began to slow down into the slow lane and then into the slowest lane before pulling over on to the hard shoulder. In Arabia one drives on the right so the hard shoulder is also on the right.
I put on the emergency lights, turned off the engine and got out.

You can't believe how hot the morning was compared even to the afternoon before.

In addition, there seemed to be some fine particles of sand been blown along in the wind.
I felt thankful that at least it wasn't a full-blown sandstorm.

I stood there just inside the yellow line, and looked back along the road.
There were old, heavy swaying trucks pounding down passed me.
I felt very much afraid, and began to wonder if I wasn't being dangerously ridiculous in being there at all.

Anyway, with some inner nudge, didn't I begin to walk back along the hard shoulder that was no more than the width of a car between the concrete barrier on my left and the yellow line on my right.

I couldn't believe the condition of the road there all along as it was littered with glistening broken glass of various colours, chipped pebbles, and bits and pieces of tyre wires, and even chunks of old distorted rubber.

How would it be ever possible for me to be able to find a small gold clip in such confusion, I asked myself.

I had walked about three hundred meters (hundred feet) or so when all of a sudden I heard this crashing sound!
I looked up, and there coming along the road at top speed was a rickety old truck loaded with broken marble.

A piece had fallen off on to the hard shoulder and the chips were already flying at a 100 kilometers (60 miles) an hour in the air after the truck!
They were heading right for me!
There was nowhere for me to hide or run.

'Oh, they're going to hit me,' I thought, and expected to get pelted with them at any moment.

But do you know what, not a single one hit me; not a single one hit me, I'm telling you, yet many had passed on right by me and were falling on the road behind me.
I could hear them whistling and screeching passed my ears.
For a moment, I couldn't move out of fright.

Well I said to myself, "That's as far as I go now," and took the falling marble as a clear sign that I had walked too far.

I quickly walked back to the car and was about to get into it, and drive away off when again the same gentle voice of Dependable spoke to me within,

"Walk on, Rich a little in front of the car."

I was very reluctant to give any ear this time, as I was very much afraid, but I eventually did, and so walked on in front of the car with keeping my eyes on the ground looking for the gold clip.

Oh, the morning was so hot that I even thought I might faint.

Compared to the road on back behind the car, this section seemed to be even more thickly littered with glistening broken glass of various colours, chipped pebbles, and bits and pieces of tyre wires, and even chunks of old distorted rubber.

I walked surely seventy meters (two hundred and thirty feet) and then stopped and said to myself,

"I have to stop this ridiculous pilgrimage before I get hurt."

The sun was now almost directly above me for I could no longer see my own shadow.
I spoke to Dependable with saying,

"If it is here, show it to me for I have to give up now."

I looked down, and if you believe in miracles at all, then what I am about to tell you is as definitive a proof as any that they do really happen.

I looked down, and there right at the toe of my left shoe in the glistening broken class of many colours was something that was not a piece of shinny glass.
I stooped down to inspect it more closely.

I picked it up with the tips of my two fingers and placed it in the palm my left hand, and yes, oh, my God wasn't it the missing gold clip of the precious watch that my wife had given me as a wedding gift!

It must have fallen off down on to the road when I removed the watch from my wrist the day before.
There was no mistake about it, for I knew it by its markings to be the one and the same.

I quickly returned to the car, and although I was afraid to be sitting there in it in such a dangerous spot, I just had to reunite the watch with its missing clip.

It was as if it never had been without it.
I was so happy that I kissed it, and I thanked and thanked my friend Dependable, before heading off down the expressway.
I'm sure I sung all the way to the Danube hypermarket.

And in a moment, didn't I find myself to be looking up at the blue-white sky through the magnificent magnolia tree by the corner of Glenbower, and enjoying its beautiful fragrance.

I continued on with my walking along by the garden wall having the memories from the magnolia in my heart, and the beautiful hill of Elksnmist before me in my eyes.

Annotations:

bokhour - from Arabic meaning, 'incense'

Maghreb - from Arabic meaning, 'sunset /where the sun sets'
It also refers to the Far West of the Arab world, namely North Africa. The term Maghreb officially includes Libya and Mauritania but it is also used with reference to Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia.

muezzin - from the Arabic mu'azzin, one who calls the faithful to prayer on the five occasions each day as prescribed.

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~ ~ ~ ~ ≈ *sailing on* ♪

Chapter **4** *A watchful heart*

Last Wednesday afternoon, I was down the street in the beautiful oratory of Saint Joseph's Carmelite Monastery.
It was three-fifty or thereabouts, and nobody else save myself was there at that time of the afternoon.

The bell calling the sisters for their Evening Prayer would be rung at four-thirty.

There was a lovely silence with the sun raying in from the southwest through the six blue-coloured glass windows that run all along the southern wall.

The oratory is built from west to east having the altar in the east compared to the village church that has the altar in the north.

I had been with a heavy heart reflecting for some time on so many bothersome issues such as the terror; no rather the crimes that are being committed these days on mothers and children in Fallujah of Iraq, when I found myself to be gazing up at the mountain scene depicted in the window behind the altar.

The scene I take to be that of Mount Carmel on the Mediterranean, yet it also reminds me at times of the Knockmealdowns off to the northeast of the village.

In that moment, I noticed Sister Rosetta-Carmel quietly entering the oratory from a door to the left up near to the altar. She genuflected on both knees towards the tabernacle before going over to her seat.
It is the first one on the right hand side down from the altar.

As she entered her seat she happened to notice me kneeling at the back, and gave me one of her familiar gentle waves and a smile that I in like kindness shared.

My gaze returned up to the mountain scene.

Before I knew it, however wasn't I given to reflecting on the life of Sister Rosetta-Carmel, and on one extraordinary event in particular from among the many in her life.

Beautiful, bright, merry, Mary Christina Healy entered the Carmelites here in the village at the age of twenty-two, and is now thirty-nine.

She is a native of the Barony of Condons and Clangibbon which is bordered by the baronies of

Kinnatalloon, Barrymore, Fermoy, Coshlea, Iffa and Offa West, and the Barony of Coshmore and Coshbride where Saint Joseph's Carmelite Monastery is located.

Her religious name is Rosetta-Carmel; a name which was revealed to her in a dream.

The particular extraordinary event that I'm going to talk about happened in the month of August in the first year of the reign of Georgius Villainius Bushievous, the 43rd emperor of the Roman Empire of the modern era.

If we can say that the world was going to hell at that time, then that is exactly where it was going.
Not alone was there war in one form or another in practically every country in the world, but there were sexual perversions beyond perversions being perpetuated at all levels of society.

Now, I am not going to go into here into all the different definitions of what constitutes sexual perversions, and what may not, rather I will assume that we are talking about human behaviour that is beneath human dignity, and violates the individual freedom of another, especially of the young.

You may wish to use a more euphemistic term such as paraphilia, and that is fine so long as we keep in mind that what we are talking about is human behaviour that is far from

being socially and culturally acceptable any place on or off the planet.

It was at that time a case of when there was war in a country sexual perversion abounded, and when there was seemingly peace even more so did it abound. Human trafficking was a big time business with the co-relationship and interdependency between struggle and greed being manipulated at every turn.

Sexual perversions were becoming a plague in many parts of the world.
And sad to say, oh, sad to say the land of Éire was no exception.
However, compared to many other countries, war here on the island was not at that time such a huge problem.

The peoples of this island have always been given over to fighting or scrapping about one thing or another.
If it isn't over land it would be over livestock, if not livestock it would be over relatives, in-laws or neighbours, and if not over these it would be over one's spouses or children or a combination of both, and many other things besides.
Fighting and scrapping seems to have always been part and parcel of life here on the island.

But the one thing, however that never really got a major foothold here was sexual perversion.

Of course, of course there were many examples of perversions, but perversion had not become a way of life.

People, especially the elderly were still managing to cling on to the system of inherited ethics and values.
Yet, daily wasn't their ability to hold on for dear life to what was good and wholesome in the past greatly weakening.

The good message was not reaching down to the younger generations like it used to in former times.

In the summer of that same year, that is, in the first year of the reign of Emperor Georgius Villainius Bushievous of the Roman Empire, an alarming word came to the land of Éire that an isle of sexual perversions on a scale hitherto unknown was about to invade.
Panic grabbed the hearts of the people from Donegal to Cork, from Galway to Dublin, and on all the little coastland islands.

Now, you and I know that isles of rock just don't float along; they are part of the ocean floor, just as the isle of Éire is itself of the Great Atlantic ocean floor.
But the Isle of All-Perversions as it was being called was moving northwards at a steady pace and heading right for Youghal Bay which is on the south coast of Éire.

The isle was about seven kilometers in width and some eleven (four by seven miles) in length.

Crawling and writhing on top of it were sexual perversions of every kind imaginable, and unimaginable being preformed.
The scene reached like a round tower up into the sky for some nine kilometers (nine miles).

Talk about disgusting beyond disgusting.
To describe it as being disgusting beyond disgusting is in fact to be using a very a mild form of description to try and express what it was that was taking place on that isle; the Isle of All-Perversions.

Photographs of it were being carried in all the daily newspapers, and round the clock television, radio and Internet coverage was been given to it.
People were able to do nothing else, I tell you but watch it, and they didn't know what to do about it.

Lay and religious leaders of all denominations with every good intention went out in small rowing boats to try and communicate with the isle, but there was no voice, no one answered nor no one heeded them.
They returned to the mainland lost for what to do.

Then politicians putting on mighty brave faces went out in motorboats, but alas many of them only became part of the problem themselves; choosing to stay rather than returning back to the mainland.

Wasn't the temptation way too strong for them, and so they helplessly became of the crawling writhing tower itself.

Then the army and the navy were called in to do something, anything, but they found themselves to be ineffective.
Whatever they threw at it, there was no effect whatsoever.
The crawling and the writhing continued on indifferently.
So they had no choice the whole lot of them but to retreat back to the mainland.

Requests were then sent abroad by the government for immediate help, but even though state-of-the-art weaponry was deployed and used in the theatre from land, sea, sky and space upon that nine kilometre high tower, no noticeable effect whatsoever had they on it.
It seemed as if they were fighting the Borg or even something far worse.

"Resistance is futile.
Prepare to be assimilated."

They all withdrew in shame to their native lands for there was nothing they could do to halt the advancement of the Isle of All-Perversions.

Hadn't even the mighty Roman Empire itself sent legions but they too had to retreat in shame.

People began to prepare for the inevitable; the complete overtaking of the land of Éire by the inhabitants of the Isle of All-Perversions.

Not everyone, it needs to be mentioned here, however was really interested in turning away the Isle of All-Perversions.

In fact there were some of the daily newspapers that were either implicitly or explicitly involved in actively trying to spread this plague.

Certain television and radio stations were also in full cahoots with those same newspapers.

It was almost impossible to log on the Internet without being banner-attacked with one form or another of a sexual perversion.
Sexual perversions were being woven into the very fabric of the society.

Now while all this high drama, fear, and sense of helplessness was taking place and shape in the world beyond the monastery walls, the good Carmelite sisters of Saint Joseph's, and of all the sisters in the Carmelite monasteries throughout the land, were steadfastly praying with great

purity of heart and trust that God would show a way for the people to deal with this desperate situation.
And desperate is was, without a doubt.

There was nobody on the land of Éire it seemed who had the courage and the strength of character to be able to tackle or even know how to tackle the problem.

It was in this hour of deepening darkness for the country, that the word of God spoke unto the heart of Sister Rosetta-Carmel while she was in contemplative prayer, as the sun was appearing over the eastern hills, on the morning of the 29th of July.

She was asked to take with her four sisters and to go and confront the Isle of All-Perversions.

Can you imagine such a request being made even of oneself?

But Sister Rosetta-Carmel did without question or comment act upon those words for she was and is a person of profound faith.

That very same day, she took with her four sisters who were of good faith, and she could have taken the whole community of sisters with her if she had been asked to for they are all of good faith.

She and her four companions headed off on foot northeast across the big field outside the monastery wall, to the monastery boat the *Abandonment* that was moored on the bank of the Bride River.

They hoisted its two lovely white sails and followed the river flow down eastwards to meet up with the Blackwater River below Camphire Bridge and south of Villierstown.

The aft sail had the following profound words beautifully embroidered on it ~

~ I sleep but my heart watches ~

while the fore sail had exquisite lily designs in it.

Along the way, swans and fishes accompanied them, and on the banks there came by deer and pheasants while overhead there was the coming and going of many species of birds.

And there were people too here and there along the banks that waved to them albeit they knew not why five sisters might be sailing down the river.

The lovely boat of sky blue and white sails carrying its precious crew followed with the river flow down by Strancally Castle ruin, down down along by Molana Abbey ruin, and

below Rhincrew ruin out into Youghal harbour by way of Youghal town on their right, and Monatray House on their left. It was the morning of the 1st of August as they entered the bay.

The moment they cleared East Point they noticed out to sea something looming on the distant horizon.
It appeared to them to be like unto some kind of an oil tanker, but it was too far out and low in the horizon to say what it was for sure.

Sister Rosetta-Carmel had been told in a dream to follow the coastline, and to head for Mount Knockadoon that is at the southern mouth of Youghal Bay.

They followed along keeping seawards of Clonard Rock and Barrel Rocks for Knockadoon promontory.

Upon reaching a safe haven below Mount Knockadoon, she requested her four companions to disembark and to climb to the top of the hill, and there to remain for her in prayer until her return.

They did as she requested while she herself continued on in *Abandonment* out to sea in the direction of that which was looming on the horizon.

She took nothing in the boat with her save her own handwritten booklet on the life and sayings of the Holy Prophet Elijah, and a container of drinking water and a blanket.

The sea was clear and calm and the weather was beautiful.
It was a lovely morning.

By now her four companions had managed to reach the top of Mount Knockadoon, and were standing in a group facing The Looming and praying.

They could now begin to see that what they had taken to be an oil tanker earlier was not an oil tanker at all.

They could see also the white sails of *Abandonment* out below them, and Sister Rosetta-Carmel sitting at the stern holding the rudder.
She waved back up to them and they down to her.
They were naturally concerned for her safety, but they were not worrying for her, for they knew she was in good hands.

And so she sailed outwards for a day and a night.

The further out from the shore Sister Rosetta-Carmel sailed the taller and taller The Looming seemed to rise on the horizon before her.
In her heart she was praying for the courage to keep going.

As she advanced she noticed that the waters were becoming more choppy and turbulent, and was no longer clear. The sun was being blocked out and Sister Rosetta-Carmel in her boat was not now in the shadow of The Looming.

However frightened she may have been, she continued on sailing forward until she reached a distance where it was no longer possible for *Abandonment* to venture any further.

Sister Rosetta-Caramel could recognise she had reached her destination.

Here she was before the Isle of All-Perversions.

A most pungent odour was in the air there and terrible were the sounds of groans, cries, and hideous laughter coming from it.

She cast her gaze skywards up along that awful edifice. What she saw was nothing but human beings crawling and writhing in all sorts of imaginable, and unimaginable acts of sexual perversion.
There were entangled amongst them animals, technologies and what-knows-what of all sorts shapes and sizes.

Read all you want about such things, look at every photograph taken of such things or watch every movie ever made on such things, and you still won't be coming anywhere

close to the grotesqueness that pure-hearted Sister Rosetta-Carmel was seeing there before her.

Any other person either on the land of Éire or perhaps in the whole round world, would not have been able to even withstand for a mere spilt second, the kind of temptation that was facing her at that moment.

Even if one had a heart of granite, they would not have been able to resist the temptation to which she was there being exposed to.

Sister Rosetta-Carmel's heart is a heart of trust in God. And in that serene confident heart she knew what she had to do.

She moved the rudder and began to sail anti-clockwise about the Isle of All-Perversions.

Oh, the waters were rising high and diving deep, but *Abandonment* sailed on as if unaffected by all that was going on beneath it.

Sister Rosetta-Carmel kept her eyes forward, and her heart in prayer.
She prayed for God's decision on the Isle of All-Perversions. God's decision would be God's decision.

Among the different prayers she prayed, the following was her favourite:

Oh, my soul glorifies the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour.
He looks on his servant in her lowliness;
henceforth all nations will call me blessed.
The Almighty works marvels for me.
Holy his name!
His mercy is from age to age,
on those who fear him.
He puts forth his arm in strength
and scatters the proud-hearted.
He casts the mighty from their thrones
and raises the lowly.
He fills the starving with good things,
sends the rich away empty.
He protects Israel, his servant,
remembering his mercy,
the mercy promised to our fathers,
to Abraham and his sons for ever.

Gospel of Saint Luke 1:46-55

For seven days and seven nights did she sail about the Isle of All-Perversions, and all the while did her four companions back on Mount Knockadoon stay steadfast in their prayer.

On completing the ninth circumnavigation of the Isle of All-Perversions something started to happen.

The waters about it became all calm and there was like a silence before a great storm.
In a moment, the Isle of All-Perversions imploded in upon itself, and nothing of it remained; neither the crawling writhing tower nor the isle itself.
God's decision on the Isle of All-Perversions had been carried through.

Sister Rosetta-Carmel cried for joy, and her heart did pray her thanks.
It was early afternoon on the 9th of August and the sun was shimmering brightly on the clear sea.
She turned the boat about and began to head for Mount Knockadoon to pick up her four companions.

As she was bringing it about however, she noticed not very far from the boat something moving in the water.
Whatever it was it seemed to want her to draw closer.
She felt no fear.

To her great surprise and amazement there were three children floating in the water; two of them were holding a baby between them.
God had given them to be the sole survivors of what had just happened.

And with tears of joy, Sister Rosetta-Carmel thanked God for showing such mercy as she lifted the children into the safety of the boat.
They were without any clothing and so she wrapped them in the blanket that lay there in the boat, and gave them water from the container to drink.

As quickly as the wind would move them she sailed the boat for land.

She picked up her four joyful companions and they sailed with the children for the harbour, and on up the Blackwater and the Bride.

One of the children was a girl of seven.
There was a boy of five and a baby girl who was must have surely been no more than two to two and a half years old.

Within sight of St Joseph's, the sisters moored *Abandonment* and thanked it for bringing them home safe and sound.

Between them the five sisters carried the children in their arms across the big field to the Monastery.

On the way they greeted the horses that were there in the field grazing.

Word went about the Monastery that the sisters were seen coming across the big field.
There was great excitement.

Now there are a number of very old sisters in the Monastery who wouldn't be able to walk long distances, so didn't the other sisters who were younger and more energetic, carry them on their backs, and off out they went all together down the field to greet the returning sisters.
They were so very very happy to see their companions back home again.

And oh, how great was their surprise and joy at seeing the little children.

Before doing anything else, the whole community went directly into the oratory with the children in their arms, and gave thanks to God for all the blessings that had been bestowed upon Sister Rosetta-Carmel and her four companions through the intercession and help of Mother Mary, Prophet Elijah and Saint Joseph.

The fragrance of fresh lilies filled the oratory.

The very next day, people from all over Éire began to arrive at the Monastery to thank the sisters for their powerful faith in God.

From that day forth, all across the island there was a great joyous returning to childlike trust and faith in God.
This marvel did not go unnoticed by the foreign press.

Over the next few weeks, the three children grew in health of body and mind.
The sisters searched and searched for their respective parents until they found them.

How terrible had been the sorrow of those parents since their children had suddenly gone missing from them the year before, and without a trace.

According to Garda Síochána detectives at the time, there was a very strong possibility that the children had been kidnapped and smuggled out of the country.

It was an absolutely heart wrenching and heart breaking time for the parents.
Yet on the day when they were reunited with their three innocent little children, in the Monastery garden, the greater by far was their joy and thanks.

It was the 1st of October, the feast day of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux.

The bell for Evening Prayer began to ring, and I was brought back again to the oratory.

Sister Rosetta-Carmel was rising to her feet and going to light a beautiful candle before the altar.

Some few from the outside community came to join the sisters in their Evening Prayer.

Sisters entered the oratory on the left, and took their places to the left and the right of the altar behind Sister Rosetta-Carmel.

And prayers began.

It was all lovely, and the joy and happiness of the sisters could be clearly seen on their faces across from each other as they recited the psalms in their gentle melodic voices.

When Israel came out of Egypt,
the house of Jacob from a people of foreign tongue,
Judah became God's sanctuary,
Israel his dominion.

The sea looked and fled,
the Jordan turned back;
the mountains skipped like rams,
the hills like lambs.

Why was it, O sea, that you fled,
O Jordan, that you turned back,

you mountains, that you skipped like rams,
you hills, like lambs?

Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord,
at the presence of the God of Jacob,
who turned the rock into a pool,
the hard rock into springs of water.

Psalm 114

With the Sacred Names - Father, Son, Holy Spirit the sisters bowed towards the center to where the beautiful candle stood softly glowing.

In their prayers they prayed for us too who had come in to join them in their solemnity.

And in my heart, I prayed for all the sisters, and especially, I prayed and gave thanks for the presence in the world and in our village of Sister Rosetta-Carmel.

And the beautiful words of Saint Jean-Baptiste-Marie Vianney, curé d'Ars came to me,

"A pure soul is like a fine pearl.
As long as it is hidden in a shell in the depths of the sea, no one thinks of admiring it,
but when it is exposed to the light of day this pearl

shines, it attracts attention.
It is thus that a pure soul now hidden from the eyes of the world will one day shine
before the angels in the light of eternity."

Annotation:

Garda Síochána - from Gaeilge meaning, 'guardian of the peace'

Augmentation, dated October 2007:

the big field - Construction of a Sewage Treatment Plant began last month in this field.

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~ ~ ~ ~ ≈ *sailing on* ♪

Chapter **5** *A continuity of life*

The wind was blowing pretty strong in from the southwest four mornings ago, as I was driving home on the N72 out of the town of Fermoy.
It was about seven forty-five and I was taking my time.

I passed Saint Patrick's Hospital on my right with admiring the great old trees that stand there all along inside the roadside wall.

Soon I was coming up to and passing on beyond the turn off down to the left for the hamlet of Clondulane.
The road up to the right would take you by Bellevue House.

I drove on enjoying the drive until I came to one of my favourite spots on the N72, and there I pulled over on the left, switched off the engine and got out of the car to take in the fantastic view.

This spot is about two hundred meters (six hundred and fifty feet) or so before you come to the crossroads where Mc Donnell Bros Ltd. has its grain silos.
Sure you know the spot well yourself.

The road to the left would be taking you on down by Kilbarry House, and on down on to the Clondulane to Ballyduff road.
And the road to the right would be taking you on over through the hamlets of Coolagown and Knockmourne, and on to the L188 at the village of Conna.

Now the panoramic view from this spot when wheeling around from the west by the northwest, north, northeast and east is breathtaking all year round.
Often I stop here just to enjoy the view be it by day or by night.

At night, I love to be watching the moon rising over it, and the turning of The Plough and the Milky Way above it, especially on a winter's night.

By day, I like to be looking at the sunspots on the far off hills, and at other times watching the shadows of great clouds being drifted along over the fields by the wind.

Oh, many too be the beautiful rainbows I have seen from that spot.

It is a heavenly place, for sure, and wouldn't I be wanting many people to be seeing the great beauty here that I do be seeing.

You should be here to view the vistas, especially when the fog rises from the valley and floats away off to the east. There's no doubt about it, but marvellous and wondrously beautiful is the sacred isle of Éire.

That morning was presenting to my eyes a combination of sunspots on the far off hills, and the shadows of great clouds being quickly drifted along over the fields by the wind.

I let loose my lengthy hair that the wind may enjoy playing with it as it was with the grass there in the fields below me.

Compassing about from the northwest both far and near places came into view.

I could see in the distance Seefin Mountain and a little nearer the white Mayan-like temples over in Moor Park, and the Cloughleagh tower castle ruin.

A little to the right of the castle I could see the village of Kilworth, and beyond the village the Kilworth Mountains, and way off to the north the mighty Galtee Mountains.

Below me in the near distance I could see the Blackwater River meandering along with the T30 road that would be taking you on to the village of Ballyduff.

On the northern side of the river I could see Kilmurry House and Rasberryhill by way on to Mocollop, and beyond the higher ground and out of view I made out must be located the hamlet of Araglin.

Off to the northeast were to be seen the Knockmealdown Mountains, and out of view I imagined where the spectacular Vee Gap to be that leads down into the villages of Clogheen and Ardfinnan, and on to the towns of Cahir and Cashel.

Beyond to the east, although out of view due to the abundance of lovely yellow furze, I thought I could see Killbarry House.

And further on to the east, and out of view I knew to be the village of Ballyduff, the town of Lismore, and the village of Cappoquin, and beyond them of course the Monavullagh and the Comeragh Mountains.

Directly down below me is the small farmhouse with its few out sheds.
It looks so pretty there among the green fields, so it does.

There is a brown coloured horse that has a big long field there all to himself behind the house and off to the left. Sometimes when I see him standing there all on his own on a rainy winter's day, don't I be feeling very sorry for him and

want to go down and cover him or bring him inside awhile, into one of those sheds until the rain passes over.

Down to the right is the modern neatly kept bungalow. Both the bungalow and the farmhouse share the same avenue with its lovely cherry tree to the right of the entrance.

And beyond the cherry tree, a little off to the southeast I could see the small pretty Scots Pine grove.
You know the one I mean on the right hand side of the road.

Behind me on the sloping field above the road were growing an abundance of primroses and white daisies. Sometimes the wind brought their fragrances to my attention. They were lovely, truly.

The spot where I do be standing is about 80 meters (250 feet) above sea level, whereas the river below is only about 45 meters (150 feet).
The hill country behind me, I believe eventually reaches up to over 150 meters (500 feet).

That morning, I was contentedly gazing away over at the Knockmealdown Mountains, with the wind blowing my hair out before and about my face, when something amazing happened.

The whole valley floor; yes, that is, the whole valley floor suddenly dropped way down, so it did!

I found myself standing on the very edge of this massive gorge that must have had a vertical drop of surely anywhere from 1000 to 2000 meters (3280 to 6560 feet).

The gorge was horseshoe in shape, having its rounded section to my east about where the abundance of yellow furze used to be, while the open-ended section stretched for several kilometers over towards the west.
The width of the gorge from where I was standing was roughly about 2 to 3 kilometers (1 to 2 miles).

I slowly looked around behind me, and there was this small yellow dirt road, and where I had parked my car there was now standing a very handsome white-haired donkey.

Rising up about me off to the east, along to the south and way off to the west were very high mountains.
And can you believe it, weren't they covered completely with snow.

Off in the distance to the northwest on the northern side of the gorge there seemed to be little hamlets nestled on the snow covered slopes of mountains.
And there was a lovely village too nestled directly across the gorge from where I stood.

The whole scene was truly lovely no doubt, but wasn't I greatly afraid to even move a centimetre for fear I would fall off over the edge, and down down into the gorge.

As I was thinking about this, I noticed what seemed to be a flock of swans flying in along from the west over the gorge. But as they came closer, I could recognise that they were not swans at all.
Rather weren't they angels with pinkish wings and wearing light golden lengthy garments.

Now, you may not believe in the existence of angels, but didn't I see them there myself over the gorge with my own eyes. They came along the gorge and right up out in front of me. There must have been about twelve to seventeen of them, and they were floating in the air with gently flapping their wings.

Without a word been spoken, I knew that they wanted me to come and fly with them over the gorge.
For a moment I looked down, and I felt terribly afraid.
And wouldn't anyone be afraid in such a situation.

Then somehow, and I don't know how, didn't I get the courage to just let myself fall over the edge.
It was a lovely fainting kind of a sensation.

Before I knew it, the smiling angels were gracefully flying about me and supporting me.

We were moving along as one over the gorge.

They stretched out their wings and tilted them, and then we began to glide down along the northern side of the gorge.
The northern wall was adorned with flowers of many different species, and the lightly crisp air was filled with this fantastic fragrance.

I could see there in the wall many caves that had been carved by human hands into the rock face.
And didn't I see monks occupied some of them, while nuns occupied others.
They all waved to us and sent us forth many happy beautiful smiles.
Hermits they must have all been.

Oh, the fragrances of the flowers were delightful.

Down down adown to the floor of the gorge the angels softly glided me.
And I found myself walking eastwards along the bank of a stream that was gently floating westwards.

In what seemed like no time at all, I was at the base of the horseshoe end of the gorge.
There I found the fountainhead of the stream.
It was a waterfall in a cave there within.
With my hands I cupped some water and washed my face.

And then brought some to my lips to drink.
It was so wonderful; beyond all tastes, I tell you.

I came out from the cave, and looked way up along the rock face; way way up along until my gaze found a bright blue sky with floating wispy white clouds.

In a moment the angels came and carried me up to where I had been standing on the edge.
There they shimmered away and I could see them no more.

Then, didn't I hear a crying and lamenting coming along the dirt road from the west.
I looked over, and I could see that there was a funeral procession coming my way along the meandering mountain road.

At the head of the procession was a donkey slowly drawing a cart on which a coffin was secured by garlands of different colours.
There were many mourners on foot behind the coffin, and then there were several donkey carts piled high with what seemed to be furniture or the likes.

As the procession passed by along the road in front of me, I automatically blessed myself, and found for some unknown reason my eyes to be welling up with tears as if I had

known who it was whose remains were there in the coffin before me.

After the chief mourners had passed on by, I went and politely inquired of others who they were taking for burial.

They told me it was a blessed writer, and that they were taking him to rest in his place of birth.
Now I knew why my eyes had welled up with tears.

They with tearful eyes graciously invited me to come along and be with them in their time of sorrow.
With them I walked along and the white-haired donkey was also in our company.

The possession moved slowly along the road, and stopped every few meters for people to cry, when too many beautiful memories of The Blessed came flooding back to them.

The road was veering around the horseshoe end of the gorge.
You can't imagine how dramatically beautiful the gorge looked off to the west from that vantage point.
On either side of the gorge the mountainsides were all covered in golden shimmering snow.
I felt I could see all the way to a distance sea.

The procession came to a halt on the northern side of the horseshoe, before what appeared to be an old monastery at the entrance to the village that I had seen from the spot across on the southern edge of the gorge.
A date on the front wall of the monastery read AD 1862.

The attendants who were in charge of the coffin were about to untie the garlands, and carry the coffin indoors for placement in the monastery, when suddenly a soft fragrant breeze blew from the south across over the gorge, and on the breeze weren't there five angels like unto the ones who had been with me earlier.

They came and floated in the air before the donkey and cart that had on it the garland secured coffin.
And they pointed and smiled to those in attendance and to the chief mourners to a grove of trees over on the mountainside, a little ways due southeast of the monastery.

In that moment, the attendants, the chief mourners, and all those who were present there including myself knew that the angels wanted The Blessed to be buried in that grove over there on the snow covered mountainside, and not in the depths of the monastery.

Now as the pathway over to the grove was not very even, people, both men and women in their turns took to carrying the coffin on their shoulders.

And didn't I too happily find myself shouldering it for a part of the way.
I was on the front on the right hand side.

Soon we arrived before the grove pointed out to us by the five angels.
It was a beautiful grove of very old majestic evergreen trees.
Surely, there must have been three to four hundred of them.
Oh, how lovely they looked in the golden shimmering snow covered mountainside.

To everyone one's amazement, wasn't there a grave already opened and prepared there to accept The Blessed.
Even a tombstone had been already inscribed for him.

With prayers, and many tears the mortal remains of The Blessed were laid to rest there before the pristine grove.
We all found ourselves looking up into the trees, and there for a moment, we beheld in the company of the five angels the face of The Blessed smiling softly down upon us.
And didn't we all feel a great sense of well-being.

After some time, we made our way back down to the monastery.
And without being even asked, everyone started to give a hand at taking the furniture and things that were loaded on to the other donkey carts into the monastery.

We carried in such things as his chair, a round writing table, an easel, his bed, a bureau, floor rugs, a chandelier with seven branches, a butterfly bookstand, books by various authors including some of Éire, a crucifix, and an unusual old tapestry depicting Jesus smiling on the cross.
We also took in many beautiful paintings, manuscripts, and notebooks that had all been painted and written by The Blessed himself.

And when we had placed everything carefully within sixteen rooms, each one of us in turn signed the visitors' book to record that we were of the first visitors to visit the newly created museum.

When everybody had left, I found myself chatting with the curator.
And he told me that for as long as there would be breath in his lungs, so long would he dedicate himself to being the faithful custodian of the museum, and to keeping alive the memory of The Blessed.

And then I found myself to be standing on my own before the monastery, and looking down at the gorge, and on over at the southern mountains.
My heart was giving great thanks for so many blessings.

I looked over up to the grove where we had laid The Blessed to rest, and somehow, I felt I should go back over up there again.

I didn't know why, merely I knew that it was something that I should do.

I went into the monastery and bade farewell to the curator, and then made my way back over up the pathway to the grove.

I sat there before the grove in silence by the grave of The Blessed until the sun had come all the way around to the west, and was now shinning directly up the gorge filling it with a most beautiful shimmering golden pool of light.

In a moment, I saw one like I knew hovering on the shimmering in the company of many angels, and he was smiling to me and gently waving his right hand.
And I knew him to be in the broad open space of his heart's homeland; a continuity of life.

With the lowering of the sun, I found myself to be walking with the donkey by my side back along the dirt road by the edge of the gorge.

When I reached the spot were I had given myself to just fall over the edge at the request of the angels, we stopped.

I stood there again, and with great contentment of heart wasn't I gazing at the whole beautiful scene, and a gentle wind playing with my hair when something amazing happened.
The whole gorge floor; yes, the whole gorge floor suddenly rose up, and returned the valley to its original formation.

It was already nighttime over the valley.
Here and there were the lights in houses to be seen.
Like lovely candles they appeared to be to my eyes.

A very thin crescent moon was setting in the west, and the turning of The Plough and the Milky Way was already well on its way.

Oh, the whole view above and below was truly breathtaking.

I found my heart to be leaping for joy and giving thanks for all that I had been privileged to see that day.

I got into my car and drove off slowly into the east, passed the starlit Scots Pine grove; passed the starlit Scots Pine grove I drove home with words of The Blessed speaking themselves in my heart.

"In a dream I saw Jesus and My God Pan sitting together in the heart of the forest.

They laughed at each other's speech, with the brook that ran near them, and the laughter of Jesus was the merrier. And they conversed long.

Pan spoke of earth and her secrets, and of his hoofed brothers and his horned sisters; and of dreams. And he spoke of roots and their nestlings, and of the sap that wakes and rises and sings to summer.

And Jesus told of the young shoots in the forest, and of flowers and fruit, and the seed that they shall bear in a season not yet come.

He spoke of birds in space and their singing in the upper world.

And He told of white harts in the desert wherein God shepherds them.

And Pan was pleased with the speech of the new God, and his nostrils quivered.

And in the same dream I beheld Pan and Jesus grow quiet and still in the stillness of the green shadows.

And then Pan took his reeds and played to Jesus.

The trees were shaken and the ferns trembled, and there was a fear upon me.

And Jesus said, "Good brother, you have the glade and the rocky height in your reeds."

Then Pan gave the reeds to Jesus and said, "You play now. It is your turn."

And Jesus said, "These reeds are too many for my mouth. I have this flute."

And He took His flute and He played.

And I heard the sound of rain in the leaves, and the singing of streams among the hills, and the falling of snow on the mountain-top.

The pulse of my heart, that had once beaten with the wind, was restored again to the wind, and all the waves of my yesterdays were upon my shore, and I was again Sarkis the shepherd, and the flute of Jesus became the pipes of countless shepherds calling to countless flocks.

Then Pan said to Jesus, "Your youth is more kin to the reed than my years. And long ere this in my stillness I have heard your song and the murmur of your name.

"Your name has a goodly sound; well shall it rise with the sap to the branches, and well shall it run with the hoofs among the hills.

"And it is not strange to me, though my father called me not by that name. It was your flute that brought it back to my memory.

"And now let us play our reeds together."

And they played together.

And their music smote heaven and earth, and a terror struck all living things.

I heard the bellow of beasts and the hunger of the forest. And I heard the cry of lonely men, and the plaint of those who long for what they know not.

I heard the sighing of the maiden for her lover, and the panting of the luckless hunter for his prey.

And then there came peace into their music, and the heavens and the earth sang together.

All this I saw in my dream, and all this I heard. "

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Chapter **6** *A merciful heart*

Yesterday afternoon, I was over strolling along the lovely avenue that leads down to Saint Mary's Abbey.

Saint Mary's Abbey is located in the beautiful valley of Glencairn, north of the Hill of Tallow, and some three kilometers (almost two miles) to the east of the village of Ballyduff, and five to the west of the town of Lismore.

It is home for a blessed community of women belonging to the Cistercian Order; the only community of Cistercian women on the island.

While nearly everybody else here on the isle is still deep in the middle of their night's sleep, the sisters of Saint Mary's are already in the oratory for the first communal prayer service or divine office of their day: Vigils which is at 4:10 am.

The community meets seven times a day in the oratory to sing the divine office, which consists of psalms, readings from Scripture, and prayers.

At the heart of their monastic life of prayer and work,

obedience and simplicity, solitude and silence is the search for God.

I love the open spaces and the grand views that the avenue offers, especially away off to the northeast and east. It is a heavenly place, for it reminds me of another lovely avenue way off in the midlands, from which I used to love to gaze southwards at the Hill of Tara.

As I was strolling, I was enjoying listening to the singing of the birds, and chatting to the rabbits I met along the way.

With nearing the Abbey, and the sun to my back, I was looking down the big field to my right which has two wonderful Scots Pine trees, and a wooded area that leads on down to the banks of the Blackwater River, when there came walking along the low stonewall that runs there by the avenue, a very handsome gent pheasant.

He jumped down and strolled on in front of me, talking away to himself before returning again on to wall.

When I reached the great majestic tree that stands there on the corner before the oratory, I stopped to marvel at its wondrous formations against the clear blue sky.

After some time, I proceeded on around to enter the oratory.

The oratory is a lovely quiet place.
It is long and narrow with a wonderful high wooden vaulted ceiling.
Its three eastern facing windows remind me of three brightly lighting candles.
The altar is situated near to the center on a nicely designed floor.

When I entered the oratory, the sisters were leaving as the second divine office of the afternoon: None which had started at 2:45 was already over.
The next office: Vespers would not be until 6:00 pm.

I sat there for a long time, letting thoughts from the avenue stroll come and go freely through my mind.
It was good to be with such beautiful recollections.

Then suddenly!
Then suddenly like a sharp rolling crackling of thunder came images and thoughts to my mind of something that I had seen earlier in the day on the television news. *

Strolling along the avenue had helped me to push them all away, as if I had never seen or known of them.

I began to tremble, and sweat from my forehead stung my eyes.
I feared for what was becoming of the world.

I earnestly prayed that the images framing images and the thoughts gathering thoughts would leave me, and they did.

And I was as a deep calm mountain lake.

Feeling restored and refreshed, I was about to leave the oratory when I noticed on a chair a little over from me to my right, a copy of the Holy Bible.

In a moment, didn't I see it; yes, didn't I see it transform in shape into a golden covered booklet.

Some inner voice encouraged me to go over and take some time to sample its contents.

And what I found written there within was the complete document titled:

> Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, Adopted on 12 August 1949 by the Diplomatic Conference for the Establishment of International Conventions for the Protection of Victims of War, held in Geneva 21 April to 12 August, 1949
> Entry into force: 21 October 1950

After reading through the entire document, I closed the golden covered booklet and returned it with thanks to the chair where it had made its presence known to me.

With taking some time for quiet reflection, I arose to leave the oratory.
And I happened to look over to the chair where I had placed the golden covered booklet, but to my surprise, yet to no surprise, hadn't the booklet returned again to being the Holy Bible.

With leaving, I noticed that some sisters were already making their way in for Vespers.
They smiled my way.
I gave a gentle wave.

In my heart, I thanked them; in my heart I thanked the whole community of Saint Mary's Abbey for their faith, dedication, and prayers for the world.

It is not easy being spiritually beautiful in these bothersome times.
Spiritually beautiful are these noble women.

Annotation:

television news ... with reference to Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad

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Chapter **7** *A sky of glorious sunshine*

Monday last, was a Bank Holiday here on the island.
I was up in the crow's-nest from early dawn happily doing some writing.

At about seven twenty-five, I went out to Hickeys Supermarket on the corner to buy some milk for the breakfast. Hickeys usually open just before half past seven every day of the week, every week of the month, every month of the year save the day of Christmas.

The air felt fresh and clear as I stepped out the front door of our sanctuary.
It was a lovely bright welcoming May morning.
The pretty pink blossoms on the apple trees beyond Bridgestone Tyre Centre were on their way to full bloom.

Reaching the square I found the village to be very quiet.

Hickeys wasn't open yet, so I went over and stood before the Janus Horse-headed monument that stands there on the corner, in front of the Lizzy Langton's bar-lounge that I may awhile take in a view of all directions.

There was nobody at all to be seen.
I concluded that everybody must have been having a good rest for themselves, seeing that it was a holiday.

The only sound to be heard was that of happy crows playing and singing away for themselves about the rooftops.

I know you might be given to taking issue with me that crows don't sing, rather that they caw, but I would have you know that when one greets someone on a morning of glorious soft rainbow showers with,

'Lovely morning, isn't it, thank God?' and the only reply you receive is -

'Dirty old day, so it is, so it is. Dirty old day, so it is.' it is then you can clearly differentiate, what is singing from what is cawing.

The only sound to be heard was that of happy crows playing and singing away for themselves about the rooftops.

I stooped down to read the Gaeilge inscription on the northeastern side of the monument.

It reads,

"S minic a dhein braimichín giobalach capaillín cumasach."

which could be taken to mean,

'It is often that a ragged/delicate colt became a competent little horse.'

On a little black plaque, on the opposite side, is recorded the names and nationalities of the artists who had created the work, and who had sponsored them.
It is also mentioned that the former president, President Mary Robinson had unveiled the monument on the 17th day of September in the year of 1991.

It is a strange piece of work, that monument, so it is, and not one that I have any real liking for at all, I must admit.

How much nicer thereabouts, I thought to myself, would have been to have a fine three-tier fountain, like unto the lovely one that stands on the Grand Parade in the city of Cork.

Young and old of the village, for generations yet to come, could with great ease culture a healthy habit for themselves of sitting about it in the company of its dancing waters, and enjoy chatting with each other, and with the visitors who would be stopping awhile for refreshments or asking for local directions.

The sun would be visiting its waters all year round.
And who knows, great verses of poetry and fine lines of prose could be composed in its inspirational ambiance.

The birds of the air on hot summer days could come and enjoy sipping its cool waters or even taking a dip therein.
Sure, wouldn't everyone love to be watching them.
And at nighttime too, wouldn't the colourful streetlights be found reflecting in the waters ever flowing.

But alas, here standeth instead this crumbling monotonous monstrous monument.

The two horses' heads represented in the upper part of the work, appear to me as if they have just charged straight out of the *Book of (the) Apocalypse* or even out of Dante's *The Divine Comedy*.

Uncomfortable too I am, so I am with the 'miniature one-footed horse', the 'mirrored ribs' and the 'elongated gut' sections of the work.

Whenever I come up to the square, be it ten times a day, I regularly look any other way, rather than directly at that monument.

Oh, I have a great love for horses, to be sure, but not for those depicted there in that piece of mediocre workshop art, I can tell you.

Art in the heart of a village has to be beautiful, and have a certain homecoming attractiveness about it that will last through the ages.

While I was musing on these things, and on the artists and their possible motivation for the work, I noticed the singing of the crows had become more excited.
I stood up and looked down each street, but I didn't notice anything out of the ordinary.

Then I looked up, and I noticed a great flock of crows accompanied by many other different kinds of birds circling high above the square, and all singing in a wondrous harmony.

I looked over out West Street, for I was hearing this very gentle sound, like unto a breeze, and seemingly coming from that direction.
Then, I saw this beautiful sparkling wave-like front coming in along the street.
It was filling up the whole street, even up to the eves of the houses.
It wasn't mist, fog or smoke.
Honestly, I didn't know what it was other than that it was truly beautiful.

Then I looked out North Street, and another great wave of the same kind was slowly rolling its way in a long towards the square.

And coming in along South Street, was yet another.

I slowly turned to look behind me out East Street, and sure enough, wasn't there another one coming in along.
This one however was different from the other three, in that the sun was shining through it, and making it even more beautiful.

And in that very moment I knew; no need to be asking me how, yes, I knew what it was that I was seeing there before my eyes, and for the every first time.

I was seeing there before my eyes for the every first time the wind!
Yes, I was seeing the wind!
Oh, my chest heaved with surprise and delight, so it did.
Wind is so beautiful.

I felt there was no need whatsoever for me to try and get out of the way, so I stepped out into the middle of the square to behold this most wondrous of happenings.

With the four waves reaching the square, I noticed them all in a slow gradual pace beginning to wheel about anticlockwise into each other.

And they became as one.

They were as one flowing about me in a circle, with a height that was higher than that of the highest chimneys on the surrounding houses.

I have no words to describe the beauty of wind or for its style of movement.
It was just so wonderfully beautiful and stylish.
Not even the most imaginative computer graphics could be possibly created, I imagine, to represent the beauty and the way of wind.

Before I was even aware of it, wasn't I already levitating there in the middle of the square; in the middle of the circle.

In a moment, the circle was lifting me way up into the morning sky.
I was in the wind, and rising away up into the glorious sunshine.
I could see nothing except the wind for it was now all about me.

The feeling was like no other experience I have ever had, save that time of being supported by the angels in the gorge of great depth.

You know how it is here on the island on a lovely warm summer's day, when a soft cool gentle breeze makes its way

down from the heavens to your face, and it makes you feel so good.
Well, that gives you some idea of how I was feeling that morning in the wind, in the sky.

What seemed like a long time yet in no time, didn't I find myself sitting on a great white sunbathed cloud, so I did.
It felt lovely and warm, soft and cosy, and had this fantastic scent like unto furze of May, so it had.

How may I go about describing to you what I am about to describe now?

Here goes.
I was with no time, yet time was with me.
Ten thousands days with ten thousand nights in a moment did come and go thrice.
And I did find myself once again in the company of wind being gently carried down adown to the surface of the planet.

I was in another place, in another land; not on the isle of Éire was I at all.
And I did take to strolling about that land.

Whenever my feet did tire of walking, wind would carry me over fields, brooks, rivers, forests, deserts, mountains and seas to other lands beyond the shores.

Found I here and there wherever I went, magnificent domes in the middle of beautiful woodlands, on the margins of golden deserts, in view of snow-capped mountains, and in cosy coves by the sea.

And I did enter many a dome and was with great surprise and delight with what I found there within.
Above each doorway was inscribed in the native language of that place the words,

"Listening is Life ~ Speaking is Virtue ~ Action is the Harmony"

Each dome contained Oratories of Listening for all known religions of our humankind, that have the highest respect for human dignity and a listening heart for the Hidden Creator of All.

In the center of each dome was a great meeting area, where all would come together to partake of some light refreshments or even a meal.

No one wore any clothing to distinguish him or herself from another on the basis of religion, but rather wore they clothes of their traditions that gave respect, joy, pride and beauty to the wearer.

At circular tables, I saw and heard people listening to each other and giving thanks to the Hidden for another day to give dignity to their neighbours.

Everyone was a witness unto those in one's company, and there within was found the joy of mutual dependency and admiration for the wonder of variety.

Some went to this Oratory of Listening while others to another, and still others to other oratories within the dome according to each one's disposition.

No one I found to be, was without spirituality, albeit there were many I found to be who felt quite comfortable with letting their own hearts be a Dome of Listening containing all oratories.

And when people had given sufficient time to listening, chatting and listening, they joyfully made their way out of the domes to their places of endeavours.

Found I not a single Dome of Listening locked up either by day or by night.

Oh, how happy, happy, happy, very happy was I to find myself strolling on the sacred isle of Éire; the isle of my birth.

Every village, town and city by shore or field had their Domes of Listening, and each were designed according to the harmony of cultures, traditions and landscape; designed according to aesthetics of the heart.

Wherever my feet and wind carried me on the planet, I found the same thing to be true the whole round world.
Found I no human settlement place on the planet that didn't have a Dome of Listening.

And wasn't I told, that a lunar telescope, had recently discovered no fewer than seventy-two Domes of Listening upon a planet, in the northern constellation near yet be far away.

Oh, how profound be the designs near and far of the Hidden through the ages.

In a moment, gentle wind was about me, and lifting me way up into the sky.
I was in the wind, and rising away up into a sky of glorious sunshine.
I could see nothing except the wind for it was now all about me.
The feeling was so wonderful.

What seemed like a long time yet in no time, didn't I find myself sitting on a great white sunbathed cloud.

It felt lovely and warm, soft and cosy, and had this fantastic scent like unto furze of May.

Ten thousands days with thousand nights in a moment did come and go thrice.
And I did find myself once again in the company of wind being gently carried down adown to the surface of the planet.

I was back again in the center of the morning square before Lizzy Langton's.
How lovely is the architectural design of that building.
Always it gives me a feeling as I am approaching the square from West Street, of being in a pretty alpine village somewhere in Switzerland or Austria.

Happy were the crows playing and singing away for themselves about the rooftops.
I did give them gentle waves and smiles.
And didn't two glide down and alight upon my waving hands and sing to me of the beauty of the new day.
I in turn did sing for them of the beauty of wind.
And in the choruses we were as one harmonious voice.

Hickeys Supermarket was open.
I went over and entered.
That time being seven thirty-seven.

With paying for a vessel of milk, I commented to Paul of Doing His Best, how truly lovely the morning was.
He agreed, and said that he would try and get away for a few hours himself in the afternoon, to take his family on a picnic down by the sea.
How wonderful I thought, and wished him a most enjoyable time with his family.

On my way back home down sun drenched East Street, I looked up at the beautiful blue sky with a heart full of thanks to the Hidden for another day to give dignity to myself, to my family, and to my neighbour.

Who is my neighbour?
My neighbour is he or she who I meet with countenance and quill; my neighbour is he or she who is in my heart seeking my prayers.

May my prayers be always giving way to listening; listening to the Voice of the Hidden.
May my prayers be always giving way to speaking; speaking with the Words of the Hidden.
May my prayers be always giving way to acting; acting in the Harmony of the Hidden.

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Chapter **8** *A feeling of homecoming*

Sitting I was five afternoons ago, on the low stonewall in the lay-by that is about half way between Tallowbridge and Lismore on the N72.

This lay-by is in an alcove of trees that is truly beautiful at any time of the year; especially it is so in late autumn come early winter.

The reason I like to sit on the wall there rather than on one of the wooden seats at the wooden table is that I feel the table is positioned a little too near to the road for comfort. Sitting back in there on the wall gives me the feeling that I'm in a lovely fresh green forest, having a small road running though it.

What a truly adventurous day of days that day had been.
Come listen awhile if you have the time, and be with letting yourself be joyfully hearing all that is here meant for you to hear.
For isn't it delighted and privileged I'd be to be sharing the happenings of that day with you.

I set out from home on foot that morning at six for the town of Lismore that is about eight kilometers (five miles) off to the northeast.

I'm going to be using miles rather than kilometers for the measuring of distances.
My reason for doing so will be presenting itself as we go along.

Stopping on the bridge before the Brideview Tavern, I beheld a great shoal of trout in the river swimming in beneath the copper beech tree from the east.
They were beautiful, I tell you.
Had I the skill to be able to count them all, perhaps I would have found there to be surely, three to four hundred of them.

I noticed an interesting phenomenon, in that if I took a step or two either way to the left or the right, I would be loosing sight of them in the reflections.
That movement and light fashions our sight oft have I found to be right.

On I proceeded and crossed over the N72 to make the slow walk up the narrow shortcut by the Hill of Tallow rather than go around by The Sweep.

Although it is a shortcut, it is rather steep and can take the wind out of you if you don't take your time.

Better still, to pause a few times to admire the stream that trickles down the margin way or chat to the horses in the east or west fields.

Before the great 'Y' tree that stands there at the top of the road, I was back again on the N72 which had swept its own way up around from the right.

I passed along by the road leading off to the left for the village of Ballyduff, and then a second one that would be taking you on over down to Glencairn Abbey.

There is a newly built bungalow on the western slope of the Hill of Tallow, and surely it is one of the loveliest locations for a house for many the mile around.
It has a grand panoramic view off the east, and around to the south, and off to the west, so it has.
And off to its northwest can be seen the beautiful hills of the Knockmealdowns.
To the northeast of it are woods on the Hill of Tallow.

It must be wonderful surely, I thought to myself to be able to view from the conservatory, sheep and lambs in the near fields, and in the far off ones, mares and foals.
Imagined I what it must be like to be able to watch the moon phases, and the rising and the setting of the stars from its garden, without being hindered by any buildings of various heights and sizes.

I prayed that the blessing of thankfulness would be always with people living in such ideal locations, having such easy views of the sacred movements in the heavens and upon the earth.

And isn't it most thankful I am for our lovely home in the heart of the village below, and although it hasn't such views of the risings and the settings, it does focus my attention on the summit of the sky.

Strolling along, I was now entering what I consider to be the avenue section of the road.
On either side are majestic trees that line the road almost all the way to Lismore.
Whether one be walking, riding a horse or driving an automobile along this section, it is like being in a wonderful world all of is own, for the trees high up do canopy over one.

An old mile-marker on my left told me that it was three miles more to Lismore, and forty-six all the way to the city of Waterford on the coast.

Off to the left between the trees, I could see the beautiful Knockmealdowns.
Oh, they're a lovely sight to behold, so they are.

I came upon an old ruin of a stone dwelling house in the trees on my right.

I stopped awhile, and thought about the summer days that were spent in building it those many many years ago, and the different families who might have occupied it day by night by day down through the generations.
And now, it appeared to be returning peacefully back into the surrounding woodland.

Walking on I came upon a Destroy the Scenery Centre where wrecked cars are stacked high on top of each other; a place where spare parts can be easily purchased.

I quickly turned my gaze to the treetops, and walked on apace until I knew I had gone well passed it.
Why such a disgrace is being allowed to be in such a lovely spot, truly is beyond my comprehension.
It must be the wages of indifference.

When I reached the lay-by alcove, there I rested myself down awhile.
I had a refreshing drink of water from a bottle I was carrying with me, and read some lines of fine poetry from *The Poets' World* by James Reeves that I like to be carrying about with me from time to time.

And here is one of the fine poems I read from it.

THE WORLD IS TOO MUCH WITH US

The world is too much with us: late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not. -- Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

After a little while of reflective musings, I set off upon my way.

Soon, I came upon an old concrete milk churn loading bay that was almost covered with ivy and moss.
I stopped and imagined the horses and carts bringing the churns of milk there long ago, and thought of the great conversations that would have taken place with the meeting of neighbours.

I pondered too the field of brown reeds that is directly there behind it.

Now a little further on took me passed the first of the pretty cottages that are to be found there along the right hand side of the road.
Their gardens looked lovely.

In a short while, I was approaching the section of the road where extensive road works must have taken place there many years ago.
The mile-marker on my left told me that it was now only two miles more to Lismore.

I had always thought that this section of the road to be a bridge over some stream or even a river, but I could never see one.
So I took the time that day to examine the bridge on its right and then on its left.

There was a small stream there sure enough hidden beneath some trees, but for its size the bridge seemed to be greatly oversized.
I concluded, that what had been done there was that the road had been raised to make it more level.
Whoever had done the work were master builders, for the stonework, especially the capping is very nicely done.

As I was looking at the arrangement of the stones, I wondered where they might have been quarried.
It was then that I noticed in off in a field to the left, what appeared to be an old stone quarry.
Of course, I had to go in to investigate close up.
The entrance has a lovely stonewall on the right.

I could easily make out where men at work would have been hammering away for days on end to quarry out the rocks. It must have been backbreaking work, and all that noise too all day long.
It was a quiet place now, bordered on high by many trees with birds singing away contentedly for themselves.

On my way out, just before reaching the entrance, I met an angel who was standing by a tree on the sun drenched stonewall on my left.

With lovely smiling eyes and ageless serenity, didn't this angel who was all winged and dressed in beautiful May attire, and standing there above me in seeming sameness of height as unto myself, request of me, that when I would get to Lismore, to be sure to make time also to visit the font situated outside the eastern wall of the Grand Castle.

With the gentle embracing of each other's right hands, I promised I would most definitely, and with that set off again happily on my way.

As I was walking along, I got this wonderful whiff of wild parsley.
It was delightful.

Soon I was passing along on my left, by an old abandoned house with high walls.
At one time it must have been a very beautiful place, I thought to myself.

I crossed over to see what I could see through a gate in the wall.
Inside to the right were abandoned horse stables.
To my pleasant surprise in over to the left saw I, some fine bamboo growing by a wall.
Didn't the sight bring back for me fond memories of a time when I lived in faraway Oriental lands.

I walked along by the wall towards another entrance to the house where I got this lovely fragrance of primroses coming to me from beneath the big trees that stand about there.
I stayed awhile to enjoy their charming presence.

Then I crossed the road, and now found myself before the lovely entrance to Tourtane House with its triple chimney gate lodge.
I could see the house itself off down the avenue to the right.

It is wonderful truly what can be done with love, patience, and treasury for old buildings.

I walked on along the final section of the great canopy.

To my left, I spotted over the field a fine newly built house with a long row of trees behind it.
They are some of the fine trees that line the road to Glencairn Abbey off to the right as one is coming out from Lismore.

A mile-marker told me that it was now only one mile more to Lismore.
This is the only mile-marker on the way that has its original stone crown work still intact.
It looked very impressive.

At the entrance to the town has been recently planted a tree that appears as if it has all but fallen over, but really it hasn't.
That's just the way it is.

I passed in along by the Toyota showroom on my left. They've got a good selection of new and quality used automobiles, but methinks for myself they are a little bit too much over on the expensive side.

On beyond the neatly kept showroom is a lovely house with two serious looking concrete eagles standing in the lawn.

I wondered what the old stone structure to the right of the house might have been.

I passed on along by a double-wheeled iron gate.

I stood awhile to admire the new school over to my right; Blackwater Community School.
I prayed in my heart for the teachers and students.
How wonderful it is to teach, learn, reflect and put to good use.

Oh, my!
Six swallows suddenly came playing into the alcove!
They seemed to be having a great time laughing away with each other high up low down and around about about.

Coming back to my story.
I strolled along by the Carnegie Public Library that dates from 1910, and off to the right I caught a glimpse of Saint Carthage's Catholic Church on South Mall with its rectangular bell tower and great octagonal window.

I continued on along by the wall to the singing of the waterfall inside in the newly created public park; Páirc na Mílaoise.
I stood at the entrance to admire the lovely green fountain.
And I wondered who the two standing near its top might be.

I sat awhile on the third wooden bench outside the wall on the bend.
The mile-marker in the wall immediately to my left told me that is was 4M 0F 16P to the village of Cappoquin.

I looked over the street and noticed that the roof on Lismore Hotel was badly in need of replacing.
Refurbishing work on the Lismore Heritage Centre I could see was still in progress.

The arrow on top the Centre was pointing on my way, so I got to my feet and walked over in front of the Archdeacon Ambrose Power Monument that gives a date of 1872.
I noticed one of its small spires was missing.
And I wondered why there was no water flowing from the work as usual.
I concluded that perhaps the pump within it must be down for some reason.

I continued over on to the footpath in front of Lismore Hotel.
To the right of the door there is a plaque that reads,

William M. Thackery (1811-1863)
Writer

I looked across the street at the lovely white veranda in The Red House Inn, and wondered how many people down

through the years must have come out and stood there to watch the world go by.

I crossed the street at the green P&T pillar box as I wanted to see what was new in the window of Lismore Books.

I found two items of interest, one a new book and the other a large cutting from a newspaper that was taped to the window from the inside.

The book was Neil Jordan's *Shade* which I wont be reading as I don't like murder novels albeit the author himself is a fine film director and writer.

The newspaper article taped on to the window featured the life and times of the 11th Duke of Devonshire, Andrew Robert Buxton Cavendish, K.G., P.C., M.C. who was born on the 2nd January 1920 and died on the 3rd May 2004.

Lismore Castle has been the Irish home of the Dukes of Devonshire since 1753 when the fourth Duke married the daughter of the fourth Earl of Cork.

With having read the article, I crossed over the street to Crotty, no I mean to Jonathan Ackroyd's jewellery shop to see what they had on display.
They always have something beautiful on the window that attracts my attention.

Today it was a box of exquisitely set green rings.
The design and quality of rings always fascinates me.

As I passed along by Door of Sign & Dine, I was admiring the nice calligraphy in which The Castle Lodge B&B across the way is written.

My destination came into sight with turning into North Mall.
I could see Saint Carthage's Cathedral at the end of the row of trees.

I went inside, and on in straight into Saint Columba's oratory.
I like to come here sometimes to meditate as it is nice and quiet.

While sitting there my eyes took to admiring the coloured glass window up to my left.
There are two figures depicted in the window.
The figure on the right nearest to the altar is that of Saint Carthage while that on the left is of a woman; a most beautiful woman.

She wears a laurel of flowers in her light golden hair.
Her dress is of a deep rich blue with outer garments of silvery white and deep rich red.

In her left hand, she holds the Holy Bible while in her right, a tall staff with a cross on top.
At her feet are three pretty blue flowers growing in a bed of what appear to be rich green ferns.

Beneath is given her name.
She is Faith.
She is not Saint Faith, she is just Faith.
How very unique, I thought.

It is recorded at the bottom of the window that it had been donated by the family of one Henry William Brougham, Dean of Lismore and his wife Lucy Allfyne Brougham in memory of their parents who had passed away in 1910 and 1913 respectively.

Faith's countenance is soft and has this beautiful faraway look about it.

I pondered, if the book she were holding represented in that single volume all the religious books every written be they of the East, South, West and North, and the staff all the trees and Nature taken as a whole, what might be the significance for me be of Faith's countenance, demeanour, and comely fashion.

And it came to me, that it would mean for me, to be like unto Faith in the world.

To be of a heart that shows itself in a countenance most pleasing, a demeanour most attractive, and a comeliness in fashion that is most exquisite and noble.

With such a wonderful insight, I took my leave of the oratory with great thankfulness of heart.

Outside the Cathedral, I took some time to notice the old iron entrance gate.
It has in its fine wrought iron work on top a depiction of a bishops' red mitre, a crosier, a cross and two keys.

Instead of taking the short cut down Deanery Hill lane to the Castle, I decided to take the longer route out by way of North Mall, and down a part of Main Street.

Walking beneath the tress was wonderful.
I came upon a white horse grazing there by the last tree while its owner had gone to do some shopping down the town.
Sometimes I see him coming into North Mall from down South Mall.
He rides bareback and always loosely ties his horse to a tree.
Often, I have seen the horse just strolling and grazing away happily without letting himself be tied to anything.
I rubbed him on his nose and wished him a happy grazing.

Before the Post Office, I turned right on into Main Street.

Momentarily, I looked across at the post office, and I thought to myself that kind Ena and Claire must be therein working away.
Ena loves to paint, and I enjoy admiring her paintings, some of which she likes to present to the world in the window on the right.

I passed along in front of Maddens Bar where it is stated that it was established in 1850.
There is a little plaque over the door there on the left that reads,

Fred Astaire (1899-1987)
Entertainer

Continued on I did to Mari Mina Pharmacy on the corner.
I stood there for a moment, and was about to turn down into Ferry lane when I noticed the oldest man in our own village, Mr. William Joseph Fitzgerald come out of the pharmacy.

He was dressed in a long trench greyish overcoat, and wearing a matching cap and fine sturdy brown boots.
In one hand he was carrying a bag with a few messages in it, and in the other a walking stick.
He didn't notice me, for he was crossing the road on to the footpath on Main Street.

Then he did a most gentlemanly thing, when he saw a young mother with a buggy and a baby in it coming along towards him from the direction of The Castle Lodge B&B.
He politely half stepped out on to the road to leave them pass. It should of course have been the other way round, in that she should have at least tried to made some way for him.

Mr. Fitzgerald who is over ninety-six has a special place in his heart for children.
He is a person of high moral awareness, who down through the years has campaigned through the 'letters pages' of local newspapers on a wide range of subjects, especially subjects of a religious nature, and about the recent decline in moral standards in Irish society.

Mr. Fitzgerald, who is more conscientious and active than many people much younger than him, attributes his great energy and long life to never letting his mind go lazy.

"I would be dead twenty years ago, if I didn't feel the need to keep interest in everything." he has been known to say.

I prayed, might he be of good health to continue to write many more letters, especially those on behalf of the yet unborn.

I continued down Ferry lane passed M. J. O'Donnell.

I noticed the entrance to Saint Carthage's Well on the left was locked; locked from the inside.

I looked up and saw the fine spire of Saint Carthage's Cathedral, and a great palm tree to its right.

Saw I also a grey concrete statuette of a falcon on top of the wall opposite the entrance to the well.

On the side of that wall, saw I four plaques depicting the four provinces of Ireland: Connacht, Ulster, Leinster and Munster.
The blue plaque with its three gold coloured crowns of Munster is over a door in the wall just before Deanery Hill lane.

Opposite Deanery lane is a little grove with some very old trees in it.
One tree in particular looks to be very old indeed.
There are a total of eight trees in the grove.

I looked up ahead, and the highest turret of Lismore Castle came into view.
I stood there for a while gazing up at it, and imagined what the view might be like from up there of the surrounding countryside.

There before me was the font in the wall of the castle that the angel had requested me to visit.

I crossed the road and stood on a flagstone slightly to the left of the font.

The font which measures almost a meter and a half (five feet) in diameter, rests on two rocks and is surrounded by cobblestones of different shapes and sizes and arranged in various patterns.
The water that pours into the font comes out through a special portal in the wall.

In a moment, while I was watching the water, didn't I notice the wall on my right become transparent, and I saw this very old tall dignified man dressed like unto a fisherman, and wearing pale lemon socks walking out from a wall in the castle itself, and out by the font.
In his left hand he was carrying a book.
He came up to me softly smiling and greeted me with a handshake saying,

"Welcome, I'm Andrew."

"Good day, Sir?
I'm Richard."

"Welcome Richard."

He then continued on off happily down the road for himself towards Warren's Walk.
With entering the walkway, he turned and gave me a wave and then proceeded on his way.

While I was pondering this happening, didn't the wall to my left now also become transparent, and I saw two people, yes, I saw two people, a man and a woman walking out of the garden towards me.
They were smiling and looked very happy.

The man was taller than the woman, and he had a fine head of brown hair.
The woman looked beautiful.
They must have been surely about thirty.
They were dressed very casually, and it appeared to me as if their fashion style was that of America in the late 1940's.
They looked very much alike, and I felt that they must surely be a brother and his sister.

Somehow they were delighted to see me.

Stretching out a hand in friendship the man greeted me with,

"Hello, I'm Jack and this is my sister Kathleen."

I shook hands with both of them and greeted them with,

"How do you do?
I'm Richard."

I don't know how it could be, but didn't I feel as if I had known them for ages.

"Isn't this surely, Richard the most perfect place in all the world?"

"There are many beautiful places here on the isle, Kathleen."

"Jack do you remember the first time you saw the castle and what you said about it?"

"Yes, I do very clearly, Kathleen.
We were driving in along the road from Cappoquin.
I called it Camelot."

"On the day before the sacred Feast of Pentecost when the companions of the Table Round had heard mass in Camelot Castle, there came riding on horseback into the great hall a most beautiful woman..."

"Very nice Richard, although the version I have been familiar with begins a little differently."

"On the eve of Pentecost, when the companions of the Round Table had come to Camelot and had heard mass, and when the tables were about to be set at the noon hour, there entered the hall a very fair damsel on horseback..."

As we strolled along together down towards the one hundred-foot single span stone arch bridge over the Blackwater River, Jack delighted in singing for Kathleen and myself the praises of the Camelot he had read about as a boy.

We stopped near to the center of the bridge to be chatting.

"While Camelot has its place sure enough, more important by far; more significant by far Richard is *la queste del Saint Graal*."

"My brother speaks French very well."

"My sister has a good sense of humour Richard."

"Oh, look here Kathleen and Richard on the capping stone is inscribed a reversed letter 'D' see."

"Please explain Jack why you consider '*la queste del Saint Graal*' to be more significant and important by far than Camelot."

"Mere courtesy Richard, as I have already discussed with Kathleen at length on numerous occasions, formal deference to the rules of knighthood are not enough to purify society: these things savour too much of the world and of corruption.

"Then what is needed Jack?"

"What is needed to regenerate mankind Richard is an insistent call to a higher Quest.
People need to identify in their own day for themselves, and for society what that higher Quest is, and how it is to be sought and found.
I read Richard to make all words my own."

"What is the significance Jack of the Holy Grail and its quest?"

"It signifies Richard the search for God, and with the human qualities required in the one who would succeed in the search for it.
God reveals Himself only to the pure - those who are pure in heart as well as in deed.
The courtiers of Camelot save Perceval who was perhaps the purest of them all were far from perfect.
They were guilty of pride, cruelty and incontinence.

I believe Richard that with good leadership and right direction a Camelot of courtiers in our own day could be refashioned to keep their eye on a single great and worthy Quest."

We moved on along near to the end of the bridge, and were about to turn out on to the R666 Regional Route to Ballysaggartmore when something seemed to be preventing me from going any further.
That's a bit strange, I thought to myself for it never had happened to me there before.

I don't know why, but suddenly didn't part of an article that had appeared in *The Cork Examiner*, dated 3rd May 1847 on how a landlord of Ballysaggartmore, a one Arthur Kiely Usher treated his tenants come to mind.

I had read,

"Arriving at Ballysaggartmore an awful sight was before my eyes, I found twelve to fourteen houses levelled to the ground. The walls of a few were still standing but the roofs were taken off, the windows broken in, and the doors removed. Groups of famished women and crying children still hovered round the place of their birth, endeavouring to find shelter from the piercing cold of the mountain blast, cowering near

the ruins or seeking refuge beneath the chimneys. The cow, the house, the wearing apparel, the furniture, and even in extreme cases the bedclothes were pawned to support existence. As I have been informed the whole tenantry, amounting with their families to over 700 persons, on the Ballysaggartmore estate, are proscribed."

Jack and Kathleen continued on their way out that road without any hindrance.
I tried to call them back for I felt something wasn't right, but they didn't seem to hear me.

As I was watching them happily chatting and walking away on together, I heard these two loud claps like thunder coming from the treetops off to my right.
I looked up in fright, but could see noting save the bright blue sky.

I then looked out the R666, but nowhere there could I see Jack and Kathleen.
I thought that very strange for they couldn't have already left from out of my view.

While I was pondering this, I happened to look down at the road in front of me, and wasn't I greatly shocked to see two dead birds lying there on the road beside each other.
Definitely they had not been there a few moments before the loud noises that I had heard.

One was a thrush and the other a starling.

With tears in my eyes, I bent down and picked them up. Although dead they still felt warm.

Looking up to the sky I prayed, and then breathed breath of mine upon them.
To them life was returned, and they flew away off to my left over the Blackwater River, and high up along the northern face of the castle, before alighting themselves on the round eastern turret.

I smiled and returned back over the bridge with waving up to them.

With passing along the wall on the castle side of the bridge, I noticed a signpost there indicating across the road to my left that read 'Lady Louisa's Walk'.
That's a bid odd, I thought to myself for Lady Louisa's Walk is not located there at all, but on the way to the village of Clogheen.
A new heritage must be being created, I concluded.

As I came along by the font where I had first met Andrew, Jack and Kathleen, wasn't I delighted to see there the thrush and the starling side by side sipping of its refreshing waters.

And they did sing for me before they returned way back up to the high round turret.

I smiled, waved and thanked them, and was about to leave when I heard the following words been spoken behind me.

"There are so many salmon there below the bridge Richard, that if I were a small boy again, I could cross to the opposite bank by walking on their backs."

"Sir, here one can be always young.
Be one; be one with the Universe."

And with a nod of agreement, and a great smile, he returned back in through the wall to the right of the font, and into the castle.

I walked on with my thoughts on along by the wall and made my way out the N72 for home.

With such recollections of the day, I was about to leave the lovely alcove when I heard the sound of horses slowly coming along the road from the direction of Lismore.
They didn't sound like horses that were being ridden.

I decided to sit where I was and wait for them to pass on by.

I began to hear also as they drew closer the sounds of joyous laughter.

I was wonderfully surprised to see entering the alcove four beautiful draft horses, pulling a boat on wheels.
It had the colours of the grass, the air, and a golden sky.
In the boat were happy men, women and children of my village.

"Richard would you like to sail home with us?"

"I would indeed be most grateful, for my legs are fair tired so they are from all the walking I have been doing this day."

On we went happily in the lovely horse drawn boat. Down by The Sweep way slowly we went with stopping here and there along the way to take in and enjoy the lovely views of our village off to the south.

How beautiful the sky appeared as we passed along beneath the great Scots Pine trees about the turning of The Sweep.

With crossing over the bridge into the village, I carefully looked with the children down at the river to see if we could find shoals of fishes in the reflections.

`They must have moved along for there were none to be seen.
But weren't our hearts leaping for joy when a great flock of swans passed overhead on their way west.

The village viewed from the bridge with the Hill of Elksnmist in the background is truly beautiful.
There is a feeling of homecoming about it all.

The Angelus bells were sweetly ringing as we came nigh on the wall of the Carmelite Monastery.

Annotation:

4M OF 16P - with a reference to the system measuring Length in miles, furlongs, chains, rods, perches, yards, feet and inches

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~ ~ ~ ~ ≈ *sailing on* ♪

Chapter **9** *A birthday celebration*

Oh, the opening few days of this passing week, saw the hush mythologies in the making's welling; the lyric mythologies maker's welling tears; the poetic mythmaker's welling tears all brim over.

Mo bhrón,
Mo bhrón,
Mo bhrón o.

Oh, why so?
Why so?
Why so?

I'll tell you why so,
why so,
why so by asking,
What do?
What do?
What do?

What do?

Yes, what, do you call a person, who in the late of a May eve sneaks out with a container filled with deadly weed killer strapped to his back, and sprays all the newly growing grasses, fern and flowers about the lovely white gate grotto where the poet has oft been seen sitting in quiet contemplation?

You don't.

What, do call a person, who in the early of a May morning reverses his latterly thickly manured wheeled tractor and slurry tank into the middle of a gently flowing flowering river right before the poet's very eyes?

You don't call them anything.

What, do you call a person, who in these glorious May days, it has been said, leaves poison strewn here and there about his lands where the poet's faithful dog enjoys awhile to sniff, run and play?

You don't call them anything at all.

What, do you call a state-owned company, that on a beautiful May morning comes along unannounced to the outskirts of the poet's village to stake creosoted poles into the sacred ground, and all in that one day decrowns by half every single tree along the bóithrín where the poet delights to stroll and dream?

You don't call them anything at all, I'm telling you.

Please, what do you call these?
What do you call these?
What?
What do you call these, please?

You don't.

You don't call these anything at all, I'm telling you, for any nomenclature given them could be construed by them and their cronies to be a form of praise.
Be with this remembrance be, that these be the actions of the mesmerized indifferent be.

Standing I was last Wednesday morning at the gate of a field on the southestern slope of the Hill of Elksnmist.

Oh, it was a lovely morning surely with swallows roaming and roaming about and about in the warm blue sky.

With leaning on the gate, I was musingly looking away off over up to another gate that leads into another field.
I suppose that gate would be about two acres distance up from me.

I could see rabbits playing before it and leaping about in the rich green grass.
I could hear pheasants chatting away in its vicinity.

I have often walked up that way to enjoy the wonderful views away to the west, north and east.

How beautiful from there it is the sight of the village nestling in the gentle valley below.

I was pondering the richness and beauty of the great field of grass before me, and enjoying watching a white wispy cloud floating away above it when I noticed that gate; that gate that leads into an upper field, slowly swing open all of its own accord.
The rabbits seemed to notice it too and moved a little to the side.
Momentarily the pheasants stopped chatting.

It is very seldom that a field gate opens all of its own accord, for they are usually locked with a running bolt, tied by a piece of wire or simply jammed shut by a rock.
I wondered why it had opened just right then while I had been watching it.
It could have opened at any other time.

As I was wondering away along such lines, didn't the whole hill for a moment briefly shake.

Now there are records of there having been light tremors on the isle here even as recent as in the last century, but somehow this didn't feel like to me an earthquake tremor.

For once in a faraway land, I was thrown out of my bed and on to the floor by an earthquake tremor.
This did not feel like such a tremor, so it didn't.

As I watched, I noticed the grass parting all the way down from the open gate to where I was standing.
The path was about two meters (six feet) in width.

Somehow, I felt that I should walk up the grass path, so I climbed over the gate and walked up the path.

As I was getting closer to the gate, I began to scent this wonderful fragrance of fresh roses.
I looked about with surprise for it was a bit early yet for roses to be in bloom.

With reaching the upper gate, I noticed that the regular landscape and horizon that normally greeted me had changed; the familiar panoramic view to the west, north and east was no longer present.
The soft gentle valley with the village was all very different.
Beyond the gate looked like a whole different country.

I was standing on the threshold of two lands.

Behind me was the familiar countryside of Éire while before me was the landscape of another country.

And here is what I saw from the threshold.

Directly to my left was a grove of pine trees on the hillside.
Below me was a shallow rocky ravine that lead down from the pine grove to a pretty village.
All the houses in the village had terracotta-tiled roofs.
In the center was the rectangular bell tower of a church that had a cross on top of it.
Away in the distance were high mountains.

I turned around to have a look back at the field of Éire, but it was nowhere to be seen.
I was quite surprised, for in its place were many high mountains.
No longer was I able to see the land of Éire.

I was in a different place; I was in a different country, and seemingly at a higher altitude above sea level.
It was strange however, in that I felt very much at home in my new surroundings for it was truly a lovely place.

With hearing birds happily singing away in the grove, I began to walk down the ravine towards the village.
I noticed from the flowers along the way that it was early summer.
There were wonderful fragrances wafting in the air.

I looked up at the sky, and it was a bright blue with a handful of floating white clouds.
It felt very good to be there.

As I was happily strolling along down the winding ravine, I made an amazing discovery.
Perhaps you will find this hard to believe.
I was a young boy; yes, I was a young boy of no more than eight or nine years of age.
I was barefoot, and wearing a short blue pants that reached to my knees, and a green T-shirt with the logo of a swan on the left-hand side over my heart.
My hair was golden brown and a little long for it was dancing about my face in a gentle breeze.

Within a moment, I heard this group of children laughing and chatting away for themselves as they were coming up the ravine.
When they saw me, they ran up to me with joyously calling out my name.

"Ricardo!"
"Ricardo!"
"Ricardo where have you been?" they anxiously enquired.

They were speaking to me in a Spanish dialect.

And to my surprise and delight, wasn't I answering them also in the same dialect.

We sat down there in the ravine, and I told them how I had been in the pine grove, when I felt a little tired and so had laid down awhile to take a short nap, during which time I had dreamt a strange dream.

With wide-open eyes they listened as I told them how in the dream, I was walking by the pine grove, and that in a moment I found myself in a different place.

I was in a different land.
I was walking down through this big field of very rich green grass.
It was a lovely place.

I told them, how that in that land I was not as a boy as I am now, but a grown man who was married to a very beautiful woman, and that we had two beautiful bright children, a boy and a girl.

They asked me what I did in that land.

I told them that I was a poetic mythmaker, happily living simply and plainly in a beautiful village, who used to love to walk the land, write beautiful poems that told a story; writing wonderful stories that oft were liken unto poems.

They were very excited to be listening to my dream, and joked that I must have been sleeping with my head resting on a grasshopper.
I assured them that I hadn't been; that it was all true, just as I had told them.

The group was made up of four girls, another boy, and myself.
They were all about my own age, but I was the youngest.

Conchita, Mari-loli and Jacinta were all eleven, and Maria was ten.
Luis was nine and a half.
And I was just nine.

We were a very happy little group of country children. Daily we played with each other by the doorways of our homes, on the verandas, in the shade between the houses, by the school wall, in the plaza, beneath the trees, and along by the fields, and down by the river.

Our favourite place of all to play was up in the nine-pine grove, that we liked to call 'The Pines'.

Here we used to love to be telling each other stories about this that and the other.
Every story caught our attention, and had to be attentively listened to right to the very end.

We were as good at attentively listening as we were at lucidly talking.

Our parents, brothers and sisters were always the first topic of conversation.

Then would be all our neighbours, our teacher, the visiting priest or doctor, and the few and far between strangers who happened to visit the village.

We would sometimes bring out our pets with us, and we would be telling stories about them, and showing what tricks they had lately learnt.
Our pets were kittens, puppies, lambs and calves.

And of course, we would be sharing each other's nighttime dreams.

Often too, we would be telling the stories our parents and grandparents would have told us about this tree, and that rock, and who had lived where long long ago, and about the world that lay beyond the distant hills.

Only one or two houses in the village had radios.

None of us children had ever left the valley, save in our dreams.
And we had had many dreams, and as such had been to many places.

We all dreamed that we would be married, save Luis who dreamt that he would be a priest.

Life for us was a natural nature trail, so wonderfully interesting all of the time.

In that lovely place, it was the summertime of nineteen sixty, and any of our lives hadn't changed significantly from that of the previous summer.
We still laughed and played together; told stories and napped with dreams in The Pines as we had always done.

Summer was the best time of all.

Now, July fifteenth of that year had been like July fourteen, thirteen and twelfth in that it was a heavenly summer's day.
All the day long we played, and with the setting of the sun we each and every one in their own home contentedly fell fast asleep.

The dawning of the new day found us all having had dreamt a dream that was very different from the dreams that we normally dreamt.

We quickly rose from our beds, and even more quickly dressed ourselves, before running out of our houses to meet each other to tell of our dreams.

We agreed however, that the best place to be telling them was up in The Pines.

With chatting and giggling and a great sense of excitement, we made our way up the ravine to The Pines.

It was truly one of those lovely summer mornings.
Beneath the gently waving pines we sat down and shared the dreams with each other.

To our absolute amazement, didn't we discover that five from amongst us had dreamt exactly the same dream, movement for movement, and detail for detail.
That had never ever happened before.

My dream alone had not been the same as those of my friends.

In their dreams, they had met a beautiful lady while the five of them were playing together in The Pines.
She seemed to have come down out of the sky, and never touched the ground, but remained standing in the air before them.

She was dressed in a white robe with a blue mantle and had a crown of golden stars on her head of long brown hair.

The lady who had a beautiful smile had spoken to them of many things, but they couldn't remember there and then the very words she had spoken.

Only they could remember that her words made them feel very cosy and happy, for she had spoken to them as if she had always known them.
She was motherly, older sisterly, friendly, and neighbourly all in one.

There was a great peace in their faces as they shared their dreams.
And they were very happy and excited to discover that the others also had had the same dream.
But they were a little sad too at first to find that I hadn't dreamt the same dream.
I assured them that I wasn't sad myself at all, but rather that I was very very happy for them that they had dreamt the same dream as each other, and that it was such a beautiful dream too.
Then they wanted to know about the dream that I had dreamt.

I told them of how I had seen all in a moment, the sun rise and float across the sky before setting and giving way to a starry night.

And way over in the starry heavens of that night, I was running along happily in the company of the loveliest of puppies and a most beautiful speckled butterfly.
We were going to some place; we were going to some place to attend a birthday celebration, but who it was for, I knew not at first.

And then somehow I came know, yet knew I not any name.

I was with telling them that the birthday celebration was for someone like unto a Mother Queen … when seemingly out of nowhere, a great bird like unto a golden swan gracefully flew by the grove.

All of us were delighted to see it, and jumped to our feet to follow it!

We ran down the ravine laughing and crying out with delight as the beautiful bird went gliding over the village.
We shouted to our neighbours and families to look to the sky!
Everybody along the way came out to watch the flight of the lovely bird for they had never seen the likes before.

In a moment; in a moment didn't I find myself standing back on the threshold of the upper gate on the eastern slope of the Hill of Elksnmist.

There was this wonderful fragrance of fresh roses.

Before me was the great field of rich green grass with the pathway running down through it to the lower gate on the roadside.

I glanced behind me, expecting to see my friends running out beyond the village after the great bird, but oh, that precious scene was there no more to be seen.

The familiar panoramic view off to the west, north and east had returned with our beautiful village nestling in the soft gentle valley.

I slowly walked down the pathway in the grass to the lower gate.

With climbing over the gate the path returned into the wave of the grass, and was no longer to be seen.

Leaning on the gate, I musingly with remembrance looked away off over up to the field to the upper gate.
And I watched as it slowly swung closed all of its own accord.

Rabbits were playing away for themselves before it and leaping about in the rich green grass.
Pheasants were chatting away in its vicinity.

I pondered the richness and beauty of the great field of grass before me, and smiled with seeing five white pretty wispy clouds floating away above it.
So many wondrous dreams we had dreamt by and by.

Strolled I on down towards the village.

Soft tears of deep missing welled up in my eyes with seeing high pines.

Daily we had played with each other by the doorways of our homes, on the verandas, in the shade between the houses, by the school wall, in the plaza, beneath the trees, and along by the fields, and down by the river.
Our favourite place of all to play was up in the nine-pine grove, that we liked to call 'The Pines'.
So many wondrous stories we had told by and by.

Soft tears of sadness brimming over with passing on along by the white gate grotto.

Mo bhrón o.

Annotations:

Mo bhrón o - from Gaeilge meaning, 'alas'

bóithrín - from Gaeilge meaning, 'lane' - originally a cow (bó) path

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Chapter **10** *A monastery garden*

Last Tuesday afternoon, before the hour of one, I was sitting facing the sun writing at the table in our beautiful back garden.

Delightful it was with the fern and lily all yet in green in the alcove on my right.
And fragrant it was with the rosemary and other spices behind me in their earthenware pots.
Oh, hidden it was too with the oriental mystiques over to my left.

Tao in character, was in the softly sounding dangling pan on the northern wall, with its companion sounding on the western wall.

Little birds from time to time came singing on by and bouncing along the top of the eastern wall.

The softly shaded southern stonewall being our fine house, and all adorned with its lovely white windows had at the time its pretty red door all ajar.

Matrix our family pet dog was snoozing away for himself in the shaded slope way before the door.

Wind was now and then gently rustling the bamboo screen that was dangling in the open doorway, and at times too delicately floating in on through to daintily kiss the chimes dangling on the left by the stairway.

Crows were resting on the chimneys of the houses to the east and the west.
Swallows where playing about in the blue, and from time to time swooped in low just for the pure fun of it.

My Love Sung-ja the Trustworthy was in the kitchen preparing some lunch.
Iris the Sophisticated was in the sitting room diligently preparing for her forthcoming end of high school exams.
Her brother Richard the Charming was in his apartment in Cork diligently preparing for his final end of second year university exam.

Everybody was happy and thankful with what they were doing.
It is good to be thankful and happy with our stations in life.

Tao in character, was in the softly sounding dangling pan behind on the stonewall, and another one there was sounding on the western wall.

Beautiful it is truly our home in the stonewalled garden. Surely our garden be a monastery garden to me.

Delightful sun was beginning to make me feel a bit drowsy, so I decided with the greatest of ease to let my head lay itself down on my arms for a little while; just for a little while until Sung-ja would be calling me to have lunch with she and Iris.

I'm sure you know well how it is on wonderful days such as these, when you lay your head down for even a few minutes of nap, that you begin to find yourself in a dream.
Even if it were only for a few minutes, a dream would take the time to visit.
And isn't it something to be very thankful for.

I love when dreams come to visit, be they in my time of slumber or moments of napping.

The last thing I heard before falling into a deep sleep was the joyous singing of a bird in the rosebushes to my right. She sounded to me as if she were heralding someone or something.

I fell away into this wonderful sleep, and sure enough a dream; a fine dream did come to visit me.

In the dream I could see myself looking down on myself.

I could see myself sleeping on a grassy sun drenched slope.
I could notice that I had a very contented expression on my face.

In a moment, didn't I find myself in my sleeping self, and was without any recollection at all of I having been my floating self looking down on my sleeping self.
I was slowly beginning to wake on the grassy slope.

Before opening my eyes, I could feel the warm sunlight upon my eyelids.
It was a lovely feeling.
I could hear the sounds of gently flapping water.

With slowly opening my eyes and rubbing them with my fingers for the sunlight was bright, I could see a wooden stockade before me, and through it lapping shimmering waters of either a lake or a river.

I slowly rose to my feet and found myself to be on the inside of a wooden stockade that was about a meter and a half (five feet) high.
I rested my arms on the stockade.

Before me lay a great wide river shimmering in the sunshine.

Judging from the position of the sun in the sky the time must have been about ten o'clock in the morning or thereabouts.
The lovely presence of the month of May was in the air.

In the water a short distance out from me was some kind of protection screen or netting.
To my right was a sign attached to the outside of the stockade. I leaned over to read it.

It read,

'Absolutely no docking here'

I didn't know were I was.

Off to my right down the river, I could see a castle tower ruin in the trees.
And with turning about to my right I could see that I was standing before a monastery ruin that had some of its wall supported by a wooden frame.
I still didn't know where I was.

Then out of the corner of my right I saw something, and with turning I beheld this medieval type castle over the ways on the riverbank, that if you can believe me, transformed itself before my eyes into an old styled house, and then that in turn

transformed itself into this beautiful stately three-storied creamy coloured mansion.

It was beautiful.

Immediately I recognized it by its pediment over the door.

It was Ballynatray House on the western bank of the Blackwater River estuary, in the Barony of Coshmore and Coshbride, county of Waterford, and province of Munster.

Now I knew where I was.
Yes, I was standing on pretty Dair Inis; the isle of oaks, the isle on which is located Molana Abbey ruin.
I could hardly believe that I was in that beautiful place for I had so often wanted to visit it.

I was standing there, but for the life of me I had no idea of how I had got there.

Oh, the whole scene of the sky, river, and mansion was truly breathtaking.

Turning my attention to the Abbey ruin, I noticed a doorway in the wall that was in an excellent state of preservation.
I went up to examine it more closely.

I had to be very careful though as there were many healthy nettles growing before it.

Inside the door on the right, I discovered three stone steps of a stairs that must have once lead up to an upper room.

I reflected there for a while on the monks who would have ascended and descended those steps, for there was some evidence of wearing in them.

When reaching the top would they have gone and sat by a window I wondered, to look out meditatively at a delightful prospect of sunrise o'er the wide waters.
Perhaps the stairs lead up to the Prior's room.

When coming down from the door, I slowly walked along having the Abbey on my left, and the stockade and the river on my right.

There were big trees with leaves in great abundance, and between them in the distance was picturesquely situated Ballynatray House.

On the grassy covered ground before me were beautiful purple flowers.
It was definitely the month of May.

On my left appeared to be the sidewall of the main chapel that seemed to be running from southeast to northwest. There were four high lancet openings in it that must have been beautiful in their day.

I noticed a small bird strolling effortlessly up the side of the wall next to one of the window openings.
I wondered what he was seeking.

I continued to slowly walk along and was surprised to see something really beautiful a little beyond the patch of purple flowers.
Can you imagine what that might have been?

I couldn't believe it myself, but wasn't there this lovely healthy oak planting, and all in fresh green foliage growing there before me.
My mouth opened with awe at the sight.

After a few moments, I went closer and ever so gently touched some of its leaves while speaking to it words of joy.

The young oak was almost the same height as myself and about a metre and a half or so in foliage spread.

I sat there in the grass beside it for some time, with gently holding its trunk in my right hand, and looking up through its branches at the blue sky.

I could feel its life in my fingertips.

I pondered all the seasons of its growth for it yet to be. Days by nights by day it would be growing away there silently and serenely in that glorious spot.
It would rise above the highest point of any remaining ruin wall to majestically blossom, bathe, and sway in the comfort of sun, moon, and star, misty rain, downy snow, and playful wind.

It would be aware of the arrival and departure of each and every visitor to the isle, and aware it would be constantly of the benevolent guardians of the harmonious mansion and demesne.

Long many long many the year it would be standing there in that spot, while my presence beside it would have most likely become for it a very vague faint fading memory or it knows an ever vivid welcoming feature of May.

With such humbling and gratifying thoughts I rose to my feet, and kissed with love and tears some more of its lovely leaves.
And I desired to give it a name that I could be always remembering it by.

Then in a moment, didn't I find myself beneath it down listening to the ground with my right ear.
And a name presented itself to my ear.

The young oak was to be called Arbor Naomh Maolanfaidh.

A lovely and well-befitting name I thought; a name fifteen hundred years already agrowing.

I strolled to the left of the young oak, and found myself before this small stone arched doorway.
Something about it made me feel that it was part of a much older and smaller chapel than the much larger one that was now adjoining it.
I don't know what it was, but I felt from it this subtle touch of a, what shall I say, 'Celtic' ambience about it.
Was it merely the way it looked or was there something more to it?

With soft warm sun on my back I slowly passed through this delightful little doorway.
With coming forth on the other side, I looked to my left and there was a sight to behold; a sad sight to behold at that.

There was a fine side entrance into the upper nave of the chapel, but alas the once probably beautiful nave was thickly matted and netted some three meters (ten feet) high with briars and nettles.

I unconsciously brought my hands up to my face for I could feel the tears were brimming over at the sight.

I could only stand in the archway of that entrance for there was no way I could enter the chapel.
The briars were only centimeters away from me.

I looked up to my right, and saw a large opening where once there must have been a beautiful big window above a sacred altar.

I was about to move on when something wondrous happened.
In a moment all the briars and nettles disappeared before my eyes, and in their place was the original nave of the chapel.
It looked beautiful.

But now there was something else; there was something far more precious and wonderful than the beautiful chapel itself.
There was someone kneeling there in the middle of the aisle facing towards the altar.

A holy man all dressed in monastic attire, and with his arms slightly outstretched having the palms facing forward and upwards, was kneeling there in the middle of the aisle.
He appeared to be in another world for so peaceful and joyful was his side countenance.

I remained where I was in the doorway without moving.

I felt sure that he would be able to see me out of the corner of his right eye, if he were to let himself for a moment be distracted from his focus by my presence.

I looked to where was his focus.
His focus was the big window; he was intently gazing up at the big window.
In that moment everything returned to the way I had found it. The holy man with the peaceful, joyful countenance was no longer to be seen.

I withdrew from the doorway and went and sat for a while on the grass, to reflect on that countenance.
I pondered who he might have been.

I rose to my feet and continued on around the back of the chapel.

With turning the corner, I happened to look up at that large window opening of the chapel, and was momentarily blinded by the sun shinning down on me.

In that moment, I saw the chapel gable to be like onto a beautiful stone monstrance having the Sacred Communion of Life radiate forth light, warmth, and tremendous love on me.

With such comfort upon my face and bosom these words appeared on my tongue,

"Blessed is the one that strolls in the light of My morn, pauses in the way of My noon, and reclines on the sofa of My eve.
Blessed is this one who delights in Me, and ponders My way night and day.
Blessed oh, blessed is this one, for he shall be like unto a young oak tree, planted on a sacred isle by the rivers of water, that brings forth his richness of fruit, in the light of his seasons.
Blessed thee be in Me."

And with the movement of the sun from out of the window opening, I continued with a great inner peace to stroll along by the wall.

I was now before the kitchen area, and wondering what a stone structure up against the wall might have been used for. It had seventeen rectangular stone holes in it.
In one of them, didn't I find a recently used bird's nest.
It looked very pretty.

Next to that structure, I saw a nicely fashioned stone draw-well, with a white marble stone embedded into the wall above it.

The well was long dry and contained plenty of last year's leaves.

I had walked on no more than two or three steps, when I heard this softly gurgling sound of water.
Where only a moment ago there had been just leaves there was now a crystal clear, almost full well of water.

I lay down on my tummy and stretched my right hand in to take some water.

Oh, it tasted beyond taste, so it did; so wonderfully wonderfully refreshing.

I remained there for some time gazing at the blueness in its depths.

With rising to my feet, I continued on along by the wall and entered an arched doorway that took me into the cloister garth.

I was surprised to find standing there a little to the left of center, a relatively modern life-sized statue of a priest wearing a biretta and a long cloak standing on top of a square pedestal.
He was holding a book under his right arm, and with his left he was holding the side of his cloak.

He was looking rather uneasily it seemed to me in the direction of the chapter room.

An inscription on the pedestal beneath him read,

The Statue is erected
to the memory of Saint Molanfide
who founded this Abbey
for Canons regular
AD 501

He was the first Abbot
And is here represented to the Order
Of Saint Augusune

This
Conluph and Statue
are erected by
Mrs Mary Brodirick Smyth
AD 1820

I said to myself, there seems to be a few items not quite accurate in that inscription, not to mention in the statue itself, and was about to stroll along by the cloister wall, when I slightly tripped over what appeared to be the corner of a piece of flat stone in the grass to the left and to the rear of the pedestal.

And the thought came into my mind didn't it, of the stumbling stone that the builders had rejected.

Something about that piece of flat stone in the grass caused me to want to stoop down, and with my hands to wipe away the loose clay and grass that was covering the remainder of it.
The more I wiped and blew away, the more remained to be removed, until eventually I had it all wiped and blown clean.

I rose to my feet to muse on it from a greater height.

What was now fully revealed there in the grass was a large dressed stone slab that was about three times as long as its breadth.
It didn't look like a headstone nor neither did it have any markings or writing on it, save one carefully chiselled out slot on the top left hand side.
The slab had been fashioned for some purpose definitely, but for what I knew not.

And as I was looking down at it, the thought crossed my mind, that I hadn't seen a single tombstone or headstone in the whole Abbey thus far.
This in itself was very unusual I thought.

I was about to move on when I thought the lovelily gleaming shinning sun was playing with my vision, for didn't I

see the following six large letters carved into the slab in a straight line from the top to the bottom.

I
E
Z
E
U
S

Well that's definitely a first for me, I thought.

They had appeared to my eyes surely, but for a fleeting moment only, and then were gone again without the slightest trace.
I even stooped down and touched the face of the slab with my fingertips, but no indentations were there to be felt.

I strolled along by the cloister wall a few times, and imagined what it might have been like to be a monk there walking and reading in quite contemplation.

I noticed an area in the northern wall leading into the main chapel that had been long since stoned up.
I wondered why, for it would have been the only doorway directly from the cloister into the chapel.

At the base of the western wall, I found a sealed up entrance that would have opened to the well in the kitchen.

The refectory, like the chapel sadly was matted and netted with briars and nettles, and perhaps it was wisdom needed them to be left there, for some of the walls didn't look very safe and sound at all.

With looking up at its southern gable, I wondered why it had only two window openings.
Why weren't there three or just the one?

Beneath the larger of the window openings, I could make out through some briars a square stone slab container area built into the wall.

I was musing on its purpose when I heard voices that seemed to have been coming from about the entrance to the cloister garth.
I can tell you I was quite surprised truly, for somehow I had thought that I was the only one on the isle at the time.

They were the voices of two men and a woman, and were not speaking a language that I could readily recognise.

I edged along the southern wall towards the entrance to the cloister.

The voices seemed to be coming from the other side of that wall.
That would have been the chapter room.

I stood and listened for a while, and then I could make out that they were speaking the language of the Land of Nesta. There were also the sounds of pickaxing the ground and shovelling earth and stones.
I hesitated for a little while, before plucking up the courage to peer about the wall.

Then was I quite astonished at the scene that was there before my eyes.

There were two men working hard with a pickaxe and a shovel in what appeared to be a grave in the floor of the chapter room.
It was strange, in that it appeared to be wider than your average grave.
A beautiful woman was standing beside it anxiously watching them dig.
They were all dressed in clothes of days gone by.

And I noticed that there was no stockade here at this side of the Abbey.

I greeted them with, "Good morning?" but seemingly they were not even aware of my existence.

I then noticed on the pathway that leads up into the cloister, an open empty lightweight coffin that was lined with some kind of coarse grey fabric resting on a wooden spar at the top end of it.

I was about retreat back into the cloister, and make my way out some other way, when I noticed the three of them become very excited about something.
Whatever they had been digging for they had found it.

The two men handed the pickaxe and the shovel up to the woman.
They then proceeded to toss the remaining clay out with their hands.
It seems that they had deliberately dug it wide so as to be able to stand on a ledge.

Very soon, there were bones being carefully sent up out of the grave, one at a time to the woman.

She was then endearingly and meticulously placing them in the empty coffin as if they were bones of her bones.

Beginning with the fifty-two feet bones, and followed by the eight leg, the four pelvis, the fifty-four hands, the six arms, the twenty-four vertebral, the twenty-five thorax, the four shoulder, the one throat, the six middle ears, and the twenty-

two skull bones she laid them all in their proper place in the grey lined coffin.

In no time she had a skeleton of somebody completely reassembled.
And she appeared to have been pleased with her work.

Judging from the width of the pelvis, and the size of the skull, it appeared to me that the skeleton that was lying there before me in the coffin was that of a man, rather than that of a woman.

While she was carefully covering the remains with the same coarse fabric that lined the coffin, the men proceeded to cover in the hole.
They covered it in so well that no one would ever be able to determine neither that it had ever been opened nor that remains had been removed from it.

When this work was completed the woman pointed to a plaque that was on the southern wall of the chapter room, and indicated that she wanted it to be removed.

It was a stone plaque and roughly measured about forty centimeters by twenty-five (fifteen inches by ten).

The two men with some careful levering and patience eventually managed to remove the plaque intact from the wall.

As they were handing it to the woman, for it did not appear to be very heavy, I could clearly see what was inscribed on it.

It read,

Here Lieth the Remains of
Raymond le Grof
Who Died
Anno Domini 1186

I thought it a bit strange, in that surely what was meant to have been written was 'le Gros' instead of 'le Grof' but there was no mistaking about it, it was recorded as a 'f' or the like, and not as a 's' that is for sure. I even considered that perhaps, and most likely, the 'f' was a 's' of an older writing style.

Then for some reason, I found myself considering the hidden intentions of the sculptor of the Mighty Ozymandias' visage that lies in the lone and level sands of some far off desert.
Had the engraver of this plaque here deliberately misspelled the name on purpose for posterity to read as either,

'Raymond the Abusive'
'Raymond the Harsh'
'Raymond the Unrefined'
'Raymond the Vulgar'

Had he well those passions read, I thought.

I wondered the why, and the particular circumstances for he to have been interred in the Abbey in the first place, and even more significantly, why so in the floor of such an important room as the chapter room.

Why I wondered, after these passed eight hundred and eighteen years had he been only now exhumed.

With such scattering thoughts, I noticed the woman placing the plaque on top of the closed coffin.

Then the two men, one standing by the wooden spar on one side at the head of the coffin, and the other on the other side, and they carrying the pickaxe and shovel, slowly and carefully together lifted up the coffin, just up above their knee level, while the woman simultaneously lifted the back of the coffin up to the same level.

An eye in a tree had captured it all.

They then walked on slowly towards the river without a word been spoken.
I followed on behind at some short distance.

By the bank they had a small barge moored.

Ever so carefully they placed the coffin in the center of the barge, and there they safely secured it with ropes.
I was a bit confused how they were able to walk so easily to the barge for the area looked rather mucky as the tide seemed to be going out.
I thought to myself they must have known exactly were to walk.

Anyway, the vessel with its tiny crew was now out in the middle of the river, and heading on down towards the estuary, and perhaps out to some waiting ship in the Bay of Youghal to carry them to their homeland with their precious cargo.

I stood there for a long time, until they were completely out of view down beyond Archangel Michael Castle Tower ruin.

I sat on a low wall by the sparkling shimmering water.

Behind me on my right was this wonderful fragrant hawthorn tree all in full white blossom.
There would be an abundance of fruit produced here in late August and early September, I thought to myself.
I smiled with thinking how happy all the little birds would be.

I looked up and saw that the branches of great oaks were canopying over me.
I felt so happy to be is such a beautiful place.

Oh, more than happy I was; full of peace I was with reflecting on all what I had seen, heard, and thought thus far.

In my heart, I found myself praying for all the holy and learned people that had once lived on sacred Dair Inis, and I found myself there in the midst of that expansive beauty of woods, groves, mighty waterway, and isle to be with a great thankfulness of heart to be praying for the good health and magnanimous spirit of the present, and all future guardians of Ballynatray House and Demesne.

I rose to my feet, and began to stroll along this nicely maintained causeway for the mainland.
On my right was this fantastic haven of fawn coloured reeds having green shoots already beginning to make their appearance.
From time to time the wind would float through the reeds creating a plenitude of lovely rustling sounds.
They were light and delightful.

With reaching the mainland, I noticed to my right a large ornate iron gate that had among its various lovely designs, one near the top depicting three trees in healthy growth.

Oh, how even more beautiful a sign the gate would be I thought, if it had been painted a rich evergreen colour.

Continuing on my way, I came to a newly constructed small bridge that was bordered by four pillars and a black ornate railing.
I stood on it for a while, to view the sky through the high trees. Truly beautiful.

Continuing on, I spotted up ahead what appeared to be the main entrance gate.

I was strolling away towards it, when suddenly behind me on my left, a gent pheasant rose out of the undergrowth, and flew on passed by me at shoulder level.

With glancing admirably at him, didn't I hear these following familiar fond words being softly spoken in my left ear,

"Richie, my Love.
Lunch is ready.
Come and join us."

"Oh, I must have dozed off for a few hours Sung-ja."

"You've only been asleep for about ten minutes Richie. Come now, let's have lunch together with Iris."

"Yes, and afterwards let's give Richard a ring, and see how he is getting on."

"Wonderful.
Let's do that.
He'll be really pleased."

"Dad, would you like some water or wine with your lunch?"

"Thank you me Lovely, water will be wonderful."

"Here you are, Dad a glass of crystal clear water.
Enjoy."

"Thank you.
Oh, Lovelies it tastes beyond taste, so it does; so wonderfully wonderfully refreshing."

Annotations:

Ballynatray - from Gaeilge meaning, 'Baile na Trá' - the home on the strand/tide; with reference to the splendid 18th century dwelling situated on the tidal shore of the Blackwater River estuary at the southern end of the Barony of Coshmore and Coshbride

Dair Inis - from Gaeilge meaning, 'oak (tree) isle/islet'

Naomh - from Gaeilge meaning, 'saint, holy'

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~ ~ ~ ~ ≈ *sailing on* ♪

Chapter **11** *A grace by the waters*

Standing I was five mornings ago, in the center of the circular concrete brick design that is located in front of the Offigí Cathartha Chontae Port Láirge building, in the town of Dungarvan, in the Barony of Decies-without-Drum.

I was counting the rings out to the periphery of the design. Eleven all of the same, and then forty of all of the same. That would make fifty-one and the one that I was standing upon would make a total of fifty-two.
I was standing on a year of weeks.

Like the arrow of a compass, I turned about with my right hand extended.
Beginning with east, I was facing the entrance to the building.
Wheeling slowly about by north, west and south.
And by south I took to following through on towards the town along the footpath on the left.

I paused to read a commemorative plaque on my left that had been unveiled on the 31st December 1999 by local poetess Mai O'Higgins.
It was in celebration of two thousand years of Christianity and the arrival of the Third Millennium.

As I strolled along in the lovely morning sunshine, some beautiful lines from one of her poems came to mind.

"... my thoughts are drifting
Where my heart will always be,
By the fair land of the Decies
'Neath the Comeraghs and the sea.
To my old home town, Dungarvan,
Sweetest place I'll ever know;
Grander folk I'll not be meeting
Wherever I may go ..."

In a little while, I found myself admiring the front of Davitte's The Quay: Restaurant & Pub on my left when my eye caught sight of a plaque on the wall to the right of the main door.

It was *The James Joyce Pub Award* presented for the establishment being an authentic Irish Pub.

I wondered to myself what would be the similarities and differences between an authentic Irish Pub, an authentic Dublin Pub, and an authentic countryside Pub.

Recorded on the plaque was a quotation from his work *Ulysses* which read,

"A good puzzle would be to cross Ireland without passing a pub."

I wondered what if the 'cross' was to be interpreted in the sense of upsetting or making one angry.

With such playing with thoughts, I wandered on my way across the main road with keeping the bridge over the Colligan River to my left.
That bridge would be taking one on over to Abbeyside.

Out before me bowed about out to sea Davitte's Quay.

The tide was out and a number of boats were lounging about in the warm mud bank in the middle of the entrance to the quay.

I enjoyed watching the sparkling shimmering water.

I strolled along the quay with having on my right the bandroom of the one hundred and twenty-nine year old Dungarvan Brass Band.
Its arched doorways and windows looked very traditional, and pretty I thought.

As I was strolling along, I was reading the dates on the iron bollards that were used for veering or fastening ropes; for attaching mooring lines especially in former times.

And seemingly, still they are being used today.
B. Graham of Waterford had manufactured them.

The first one was dated 1879, and the following ones 1901, 1898, 1884, 1886, and 1879 respectively while the seventh one had only the figures 898 on it.
Somehow the '1' must have been removed with wear.

I imagined for a moment, what if in fact that was its actual date; what a great history of the coming and going of ships and people would have been recorded in its depths.

The eighth bollard was manufactured by J. Moir Park Foundry of Waterford and recorded the year of 1913.
The ninth was again by Graham and dated 1884, and so too was the tenth having the date of 1879.

A thought fleeted across my mind, what if they were not dates at all only the individual numbers of each bollard.

I noticed the tenth one had a great big rusty chain lugged onto it that lead to the edge of the quay wall, and then dropped out of sight.
I went and looked to see what it was mooring, but I found it only to be loosing itself in the water there below the wall.

I decided there at the tenth to cross the road.

I found myself before Cox's Lane with the Leabharlann on my left and The Anchor Bar on my right.
I walked along narrow Cox's Lane that brought me out on to Main Street.

Crossing the street, I strolled up Friary Street in the lovely sunshine, until I found myself before Saint Augustine's Friary Chapel on the left.

I stood in the gateway to read the Latin date on the bell tower.

Anno MDCCCLVIII (1858)

Before entering the church proper, I strolled over to the left as a statue above a window had caught my attention.

There below I stood and looked up, and saw a statue I took to be that of Saint Patrick.
I was taken aback a little by how shook he appeared to be, and how aghast seemed to be his countenance.
He appeared to be looking at something way westward out beyond over the roofs of the street buildings.
Whatever it was, he didn't appear to be very happy about it, that's for sure.

With entering the church I noticed the date of 1820 on a holy water font to my left.

Something about it gave me the feeling that it might even have one time belonged to an older church.

I respectfully walked up the center aisle, and found myself before the altar reading the following words in the mosaic floor.

"Tollelege Tollelege"

These Latin words "Tolle, lege. Tolle, lege." mean,

"Pick up and read. Pick up and read."

They are with reference to a happening one September's evening in the year 386 AD, in a garden in the faraway city of Milan, in the land of Italy when Aurelius Augustinus of Tagaste, in the North African country of Algeria was sobbing away to himself with contemplating the waywardness of his life to date, heard a child's voice; a divine command by his own account, which told him to

"Pick up and read. Pick up and read."

Next to Aurelius was a copy of Saint Paul's *Epistle to the Romans*.
He picked it up, opened it, and read the first verses that caught his eye.
They were from Chapter 13 verses 13-14.

"sicut in die honeste ambulemus non in comesationibus et ebrietatibus non in cubilibus et inpudicitiis non in contentione et aemulatione
sed induite Dominum Iesum Christum et carnis curam ne feceritis in desideriis"

One possible translation might be,

"Let us walk honestly, as in the day: not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and impurities, not in contention and envy.
But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ: and make not provision for the flesh in its concupiscences."

Another might be,

"Let us conduct ourselves becomingly as in the day, not in revelling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarrelling and jealousy.
But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires."

After reading them, he tells us himself,

"I neither wished nor needed to read further.
At once, with the last words of this sentence, it was as if a light of relief from all anxiety flooded into my heart.
All the shadows of doubt were dispelled."

I walked over to a shrine on my right.

There was a life-sized statue of an Augustinian nun; Saint Rita of Cascia.
She had a beautiful countenance, but that was not what held my attention.
Rather, wasn't it a red glistening cut on her forehead.

Perhaps it was the lightening, I thought, so I moved up closer to confirm.
It wasn't the lightening.
There was clearly a red glistening cut or wound in her forehead.

Now not knowing anything about the good sister or why someone had depicted her with such a wound on her lovely forehead, I continued on my way.

Back out in the lovely sunshine, I crossed Friary Street and entered the Dungarvan Museum that is housed in the Old Town Hall.
Therein I took my time to muse on the many interesting things that were on display.

I mused on a ship's binnacle from one of the boats that ferried passengers out to waiting liners at Cobh in days gone by.

I mused on two big old rusty keys from Kilmacthomas Union Workhouse & Fever Hospital, and on an original door from Dungarvan Workhouse dated circa 1841.

I mused on a Neolithic stone axe from circa 3000-2000 BC found at a place called Islandhubbock, in the county Waterford.

I mused on the last words of Edmond Power of Ballygagin who was forced to depart this life at four o'clock in the afternoon of Tuesday, the 22nd October 1799.

"Beidh an lá ag an bPaorach Fós."
(Power will win the day yet.)

I mused on *The Moresby* and her crew, and on her brave thirty-one year old captain, Captain Caleb Francis Coomber and his family; his daughter Ivy Neesham aged only two and a quarter, and his wife Edith Isabella aged only twenty-nine.

The Moresby ran aground in rough seas off Ballinacourty lighthouse in Dungarvan Bay, on Christmas Eve 1895 with the lost of twenty lives.

I read the following account.

[On 23rd December the ship ran into rough weather.

Barker went below and brought up a plum pudding, dividing the pudding between them, Barker said "Here, boys, this is the last plum pudding you will ever eat."
All of us ate out share of the plum pudding but in silence.
Gregory did not speak, and everyone's mind was far away with the dear ones we left at home, but a few days before.
It was, indeed a sorrowful feast.
At about 1p.m. the Moresby followed the schooner, the Mary Sinclair into Dungarvan bay.
The Mary Sinclair was also in difficulty at this point.
The keeper of Ballinacourty lighthouse had seen both ships in distress and saw that they were heading for shore at Clonea beach.
The Mary Sinclair ran aground on the beach but the Moresby changed course.
It steered towards the lighthouse and set anchor at 2.30p.m., about ¾ of a mile from the lighthouse.
Around 4p.m. the Ballinacourty Lifeboat set out for the ship to ascertain if the crew wished to be taken off, none wished to do so.
During the night the weather deteriorated and the Moresby sent out distress signals.
About 4.30a.m. on the 24th the anchor broke and the ship went on its side.
The captain and his wife and child, seven apprentices, the first and second mate and two others had to climb on the mizzen rigging.
The remainder of the crew were forward.

By 11a.m. the masts had dropped closer to the water and as the crew saw no sign of a lifeboat coming to their rescue they decided to swim for shore.

Around mid-day the Ballinacourty lifeboat, manned by a volunteer crew from Dungarvan, set out to rescue the remaining crew, most of whom were in the sea.

Henry Blount recalled the rescue:
"I had been in the water nearly an hour when I saw the lifeboat coming towards me.... I was not more than 300 or 400 yards from the ship when I was dragged into a lifeboat thoroughly exhausted.
Three Russians Finns and a Scotsman were afterwards picked up.
Michie was also taken in, but appeared to be dead, as he never revived.
Ten or twenty minutes later Barker was likewise rescued from the sea but died directly we reached shore...
When we landed, I was carried to the Coastguard station.
I was provided with warm clothing...and was shortly afterwards taken to Dungarvan hospital, where I remained until the morning after Christmas day.
I was then fetched to identify the bodies which had been washed up.
Gregory's body was bought in by the tide on Friday, seven or eight miles from Dungarvan...

Barker was buried on Friday and Gregory on Saturday in the Protestant churchyard at Dungarvan.
When I left on Saturday, part of the hull and one of the masts was all that could be seen of the Moresby.
The bodies of the captain, his wife and child were washed ashore and all buried in one grave.
The baby was washed ashore just as I was leaving Dungarvan."]

Henry Blount *continues …*

["I cannot tell you how anxiously we waited for the lifeboat, expecting to see it every minute.
But still there was no signs of it… to add to the perilousness of the situation, the ship gave unmistakable evidence of breaking up and then it was everyone for himself.
The little child was placed on the Captain's back…the captain jumped into the seething ocean, followed by the mate who was accompanied by the captain's wife."]

With giving a greeting to the friendly dedicated staff and signing the visitors' book, I took my leave of the museum.

Back out on the bright street, I turned right and headed up for Emmett Street.

With turning right into Emmett Street, I noticed a very forlorn looking statue of Our Lady standing on a building off to my left.

As I was strolling along the midday Angelus bell rung in Saint Mary's Church.

Now you know well how I love the sounds of bells, especially church bells, but the sound of this particular bell well, was very very flat indeed.
It somewhat irritated me, so it did.

I don't know why, but somehow I didn't have any great desire to enter the church.
Now that was strange for me, for I enjoy visiting churches.
Anyway I did, and was with entering the church momentarily blinded by the darkness.

With finding my vision, I looked up at the two off white marble statues of angels on either side of the inner door.
They appeared to me to be very sad or was it me, and I wondered too if they had been placed in the wrong positions in that the one on the left should have been placed on the right and visa versa.
They also gave me the impression that they had once belonged perhaps to an older church or chapel.

I wondered why both their wings were wounded.

I went down to the back of the church to visit a particular statue, but didn't I discover to my surprise that it was no longer there to be seen.
Instead, in its place was a nice statue of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux.

I wondered why it had been removed.

Then I took a few moments to view a pieta across the way, but somehow I didn't like to be looking at it.
The congealed bosom wound was too central for my vision.

Lately, and I don't know why, but when I reflect on the reality of the Holy Communion; on the body and blood, I feel nauseated, and find it very very difficult to receive the Holy Communion.

How to move beyond this reality of the Real Presence is proving itself to be a real challenge.

The Holy Eucharist and Eucharistic Exposition and Adoration only seem to be intensifying the reality for me.

I need wings; I need wings surely to fly beyond all of this sanguinariness.

With such heavy baffling thoughts, I respectfully walked up the center aisle.

I noticed every window had thickly coloured glass that had the effect of darkening the whole interior.

Standing before the black tree-trunked altar, I had the impression that something, perhaps a statue or crucifix had been removed or gone missing from directly over the tabernacle.

I don't know was it because of the flatness of the bell, the wounded wings of the angels, the removal of the statue or the partial revulsion I experienced at the pieta, but somehow I couldn't feel at home in that church.
I thought it unusual to have such feelings for only a year or so had gone by since my previous visit, and I had felt fine then.

On my way out, I prayed for the parishioners and their priests that they would be continuing to admire the church as a comfortable and beautiful place of worship for them.

Outside, and I walked around the back of the church to view the sea, but alas my vision, wasn't it distracted by rows and rows of headstones after headstones.
Enough, enough, enough now, I said to myself, and left the church grounds.

It is very rare that I've had such feelings in a church and on its grounds.
It made me feel sad.

I continued on with my strolling wherever it was now going to be leading me.

I went down bright sunny Mary's Street, and turned right into Parnell Street, and on up Main Street.

And I was about to turn down into Carberry Lane, that is before Cox's Lane when I noticed this nice looking black and white façade building up Main Street.
I strolled along the left footpath in its direction.

And I exchanged greetings with a woman and her daughter from my village that came strolling along that way. They were enjoying chatting away to each other.

She is one of the ladies that work in Hickeys Supermarket on the corner.

It was comforting to see a familiar smiling face away from home.

I was nearing the nice looking building when I noticed it had the following written on it.

1690
Old Market House
Arts Centre

With standing before it, I admired the artistry of a lovely ornate fish artwork design inside a window to the left of the door.

And I could read from a plaque at the base of the wall that Ms Síle de Valera, Minister for Arts, Culture, Gaeltacht and the Islands had opened the Arts Centre on the 10th of April 2000.

Having once before enjoyed a visit to the Centre, I decided to stroll on about to the right of the door.
There on a sidewall, I read the following plaque.

Edmond Power of Ballygagin
United Irishmen
was h..... from this building
on Tuesday
October, 22, 1799

Why, I wondered wasn't the time also mentioned: at four in the afternoon.
Such a discovery of such a shocking happening, didn't make me feel great at all, to tell you the truth.
I wasn't in the better of it.
And I don't know why I hadn't seen it the last time I'd visited the Centre.

His last words came back to me.

"Beidh an lá ag an bPaorach Fós."
(Power will win the day yet.)

I came around the front of the Centre and strolled along out Castle Street.
Without looking about me, I felt that someone or some animal or something was watching me with great suspicion.

I paused to admire the stonework about a sealed door and window in Saint Garvan's Church ruin on my right.

I looked back Castle Street for a moment, and noticed to my surprise what appeared to be an angry blacksmith hunting a nosey scrawny pig away from the Old Market House, and out of town.

The more the blacksmith shouted and booted the pig, the more oft times didn't the pig attempt to circle round back.

Then in a moment, ever before reaching me, they had disappeared; vanished completely, they had.
And I was glad.

Strolled I along with having the office of WLRFM 95.1/ 97.5 on my right, and a green grassy islet on my left before the entrance to Dungarvan Castle ruin.

With looking over at the wall of the Castle, James Joyce's words came to mind, and I found myself giving them my own content.

"A great puzzle would be to cross Ireland without passing a ruin of one form or another."

And I smiled to myself for all ruins on the isle are of the same authenticity.

While I was standing there in the lovely warm sunshine viewing the Castle wall, I became aware of this fantastic tingling sensation rise up from my feet, on up to my shoulders, out to my fingertips, and on up to the hair ends on my head. It had a slightly ticklish effect.
And I reasoned, that it must have been caused by sun's warmth combining with a slight sea breeze.

Then it slowly faded and faded from my head downward all the way to my feet, until I wasn't aware of its presence anymore.
It had been a lovely sensation, so it had.

I was about to stroll on when I noticed some two-dimensional 'things', 'shapes', 'designs' or 'patterns' moving on the ground beneath and about my shoes.
They moved on to the grassy islet, and over and on up the Castle wall.

Within a few moments, the entire wall to the left and to the right about the open entrance was completely covered with these beautiful two-dimensional patterns or designs.

I thought someone from behind me in the car park was projecting them onto the wall, so I turned to see who it might be, only to find that there was nobody there to be seen.
And besides, there were as many again of the same designs playing or floating about the cars and the car park wall.

These designs were now about me in all directions.

I was amazed to notice that the two men who were cutting grass on the islet before the Castle, and the two more who were having some sandwiches sitting by the Castle wall nearest the quay, didn't seem to be aware of the designs at all.

I continued to marvel at the designs as they seemingly bounced about playfully all over the place.
They were of many different colours, and were also themselves multicoloured, and were of various degrees of complexity in design.
They looked so beautiful, so they did.

The first comparative thought that came to mind, was that they resembled beautiful Volvox algae unconfined by any form of mucilage and without flagella.

And if I were to try and describe the designs some more, and I have to be treading delicately here, I would say that they vaguely resembled highly advanced crop circles devoid of circularity or any straight lines.

They were exclusively elliptical, so they were, each and every one of them.
And each and every one of them was spontaneously, and continuously, transforming into other elliptical designs as the clouds in the high blue sky change shape constantly, except that in the case of the clouds the wind is the agent of change. Here the source of the changing was way beyond my comprehension.

As I was watching them, didn't one of them appear before me as five colourful vertical ellipses of different sizes, that all together one top of the other stood about the same height and width as myself.

I can quite appreciate that this is going to be difficult for you to accept, but didn't I see it first as being two-dimensional then eleven, four, nine, fourteen, ten, five, twelve, fifteen, thirteen, sixteen, eight, three, six, seven, and then all at once as being seventeen-dimensional, and never once a straight line in all the transformations did I see.

It was an expression and manifestation of a geometry that I have never before witnessed.

In a moment, it passed right on out through me from my head to my feet like a very fine screen.
And as it passed through me, I was consumed by this tremendous fragrance of which none the likes I have ever scented in my life.

In a moment, I saw all the designs including the one that had just passed right through me, move along the Castle wall and out between it and the end of the car park wall, out over the boats off the quay.
There, just above the boats the myriad designs all came together to form one great ellipse.

If I were to try and say what that one great elliptical design reminded me of, I would have to say, that the nearest thing would be an ancient or even futuristic highly coloured chariot.

Yes, a chariot.

By ancient I mean here ante-ore based, and by futuristic ultra-ore based.

The elliptical chariot was soundlessly undulating there over the boats; over the waters without disturbing them in the slightest.

And couldn't I see its reflection in the water.

It measured; I suppose some fifty meters (160 feet) in length, by about some thirty (100) in width and about twenty (70) in height.

I could see some of the houses across beneath it on Strandside South of Abbeyside.

There was not a single design in that magnificent chariot that wasn't moving and transforming itself, and as a result, the overall shape of the chariot was constantly transforming itself as multidimensional.
It was truly amazing to watch.

I felt my eyes hadn't the ability to take in everything of what they were being asked to take in; so many were the colourful transformations in designs happing so spontaneously quickly.

I noticed the grass cutters, the two having lunch by the wall, and a tourist couple with a movie camera weren't even aware of the presence of this wondrously beautiful chariot undulating above the boats.

I looked around to see if anyone in the WLRFM office was viewing it or taking pictures, but nobody save myself seemed to be even aware of this marvel in the quay.

With watching the chariot, it appeared to my eyes as if it had a full moon or a bright star shinning from within it, yet it seemed to be without an interior.

I had this tremendous 'knowness' about everything.

If something like unto what I have been just describing to you has a life all of its own, then you will be able to accept it when I tell you that in its chariot-like presentation, I felt it to be 'smiling' over to me.
Not the shape of a smile, but the impression of that of smiling.

Chariots, vessels or ships we have been accustomed to believe don't 'smile' but I'm telling you honestly, this particular chariot was 'smiling' to me.
And I felt myself to be smiling in return to it.

In a moment, I saw it transform itself like unto a great multicoloured floral arrangement.

Soundlessly it slowly rose up into the sky.

It appeared to be like unto a most exquisite transparent rosette pattern as it rose and rose up into a blue opening in the white wispy clouds.

The air abounded with delicious fragrances, aromas, and scents that have no comparatives known unto me.

With a great thankfulness of heart was I gazing into the heavens for been given the grace to see something so beautiful from beyond the confines of my everyday planetary vision.

I was with warm remembrances too, of seeing from time to time as a young boy, similar wonders in diamond and roundabout patterns, playing their butterfly-like way, high up and down near in the night skies o'er my native garden.

It was comforting and reassuring to have been again seeing what I had so delighted seeing from the days when vision had first come to my eyes.

Oh, and there had been times too, those lonely times too when although with my eyes full wide open, the seeing of such marvels had not been present to me.

I stayed gazing at that spot in the glorious heavens for some time until the opening had completely closed over.

With walking along the quay, I found myself taking notice of the names of the nearest boats out from me.

There was the ~

Moonbeam

Blue Crystal *Osprey*

Avoca *Saoirse* *Al-Ecco* *Y-Bserom ~~~*

Hannah-K *Eloise*

A happy looking family crew of three on board the *Y-Bserom* were already hoisting a sail, and slowly ~~~ out beyond the other boats.

I waved to them with calling out 'Ahoy!' and wished them 'Bon bon bon voyage!'

The smiling mother and father waved together to me in return with their little girl blowing me kisses on the soft warm sprightly breeze.

I imagined soon they would be passing out safely by Cunnigar Point, and by Ballynacourty Point, and out of the harbour by Helvick Head to the beyond welcoming open sea. And perhaps from there they would be sailing I thought all the way of the waves to the patiently waiting South Seas.

With strolling along by the bollards, I noticed some people were chatting away and taking a drink outside The Moorings Pub.

I paused awhile to enjoy reading the Chinese calligraphy above the window of the Sea Palace Restaurant.
I have a great interest and liking for the Classical Chinese system of writing; myriads of pictures in delightful concision.

Students were studying away diligently in the Leabharlann, and in my heart I wished them every success in their forthcoming exams.

I smiled at reaching the bollard with the great heavy rusty chain lugged about it.
This I remembered was where I had crossed over earlier and strolled up Cox's Lane.

With strolling on along the quay, and on by the bridge over the Colligan River, I was in no time back standing in the center of the great circular concrete design in front of the Waterford County Civic Offices building.

Looking down at the center block, I said to myself, that it should be at least circular rather than square, for no straight lines at all be there in the air.

Cruising back home along the N72 I thought of all that I had been graced to experience in the welcoming town of Dún Garbhán.

And with passing along by the lovely hill of Scots Pines on the left, just before the turn off for the scenic Dromana Drive, the following spontaneous thoughts were playing about in my mind.

Elliptical in design be I must be for elliptical in design be the Universe I now see.
A living elliptical design I be, I see.
Oh, to fall short turns out in truth to be the complete full with having all things been profoundly considered.
See I the Universe now to be fields and fields of elliptical designs without elliptical end; elliptical designs without elliptical end be the living Universe to me.
And I laughed away to myself most pleasantly.

Charioteering on for the village of Cappoquin, I was enchanted by all the lovely rich green fields resplendent with golden yellow buttercups and creamy pink hawthorns.

With passing along by the great woodlands on my right, and the Blackwater River on my left between Cappoquin and Lismore, I felt myself to be in another world.

All but gliding over the one hundred-foot single span stone arch bridge over the Blackwater River at Lismore, and with having the lovely medieval 'gate lodge' on my right, I was in a few moments humming along home on the beautifully sun drenched canopied avenue which I do, so very much love.

Annotations:

my thoughts are drifting ... - from the poem *Dungarvan* found on page one of *The Things I Know of Flowers & other poems* by Mai O'Higgins - compiled & edited by Tom Keith, Litto Press, 2003

~ Dungarvan ~

Tonight my thoughts are drifting
Where my heart will always be,
By the fair land of the Decies
'Neath the Comeraghs and the sea.
To my old home town, Dungarvan,
Sweetest place I'll ever know;
Grander folk I'll not be meeting
Wherever I may go.
Many milestones now divide us
But you're ever dear to me;
Back to you I'm oft returning
On the wings of memory.
Round your streets I often wander
Kindly friends again I meet;
Down the Quay, the Park, the Lookout,
Childhood memories there I greet.
On the bridge I often linger
And with mist-filled eyes I see,
Dear old Abbeyside there yonder,
Place of golden memory.
Sometimes too, I go a-sailing
Up and down the little Bay,
The old Cunnigar I'm greeting
And dear Helvick capped in grey.
Dear Hometown, until our meeting
I'll bid adieu in prayer,
God protect you and your loved ones
Always in His blessed care.

Leabharlann - from Gaeilge meaning, 'Library'

Pick up and read ... - from Saint Augustine's *Confessions,* page 153

Volvox - Volvox is a Chlorophyte, or green alga and it is found in ponds and ditches, and even in shallow puddles. The most favourable place to look for it is in the deeper ponds, lagoons, and ditches that receive an abundance of rainwater.

Algae are simple plant organisms found in all wet environments. They range in size from microscopic forms to the simple macroscopic forms of 'pondweeds', and the large seaweeds.

All are interesting to study but microscopists generally agree that one of the most beautiful to behold is Volvox. These are spherical colonies of green cells clinging to a semi-transparent hollow ball of mucilage. A single colony may consist of over 500 cells, each one with a tiny pair of whip-like tails (flagella) - and all cells undulating their flagella in unison, propelling the colony through the water.

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Chapter **12** *A planted pyramid*

The ticking of the wall clock four mornings ago, was the only sound to be heard in the Church of the Immaculate Conception, down East Street.

It was presenting to me in this way the time of IX: XLVIII (9:48).

I had gone down to the church to say a prayer and light some candles for Iris and her friends who on that day were starting their Leaving Certificate Examination with papers English I & II.

After being in my regular seat for a while, I went over to the center aisle, and sat in the first seat on the right down from the altar.
There was at the time nobody else in the church.

I was with admiring the mosaic *fleurs-de-lis* in the floor about the altar when my gaze under easy sail floated its way up to a design in the tetrastyle facade of the altar.

At first I took it to be of two diamond shapes: a smaller one within a larger one.

But the more I looked at it, didn't I begin to see four pyramids as if two were on a riverbank and the other two their reflection in the waters below.

With such a pleasing image I was left with for some time to be enjoying, before it was given to me to see that what I was looking at, was verily, four square pyramids having two common square centrals, and with four triangle sides reaching to an upper vertex, and four reaching to a lower in each respectively.

In other words, two square pyramids resting on top of two inverted pyramids making two and not four polygons.

And in a moment, I was with seeing in truth what I was there meant to be seeing.

I saw, and if I may be with presenting it in this fashion; I saw a polygon having eight triangle sides having within a core of eight triangle sides with its lower vertex planted in the ground like onto a root while its upper above ground like unto a tree.

In like fashion I could say, that what I saw was a polygon of eight triangle sides having within a core of eight triangle sides with its lower vertex planted in the air like unto an inverted root while its upper below ground like unto an inverted tree.

Either way golden phi was sure having its day.

I gazed and marvelled at what was being revealed to my eyes, and was about to take my leave when I noticed a form taking unto itself a shape there within the core.

Surely, you will find this difficult to believe, and I must admit I did too myself at first, but I'm telling you, that there within the core, being it itself within the plant that was half buried in the ground of that land, was a misty outline shape of someone not at all unlike myself.
Yet, who he was in truth, knew not I.

He was standing quite still in the center of that inner world. There was nothing beneath him, nothing about him or nothing above him.
He was standing in its center without any visible supports whatsoever to be seen.

Then I did come to notice that his head was faintly glowing a soft golden.

In a moment, there did come to shine in down through a shaft from a Sun in the high heavens above that land, a golden beam of light, and with the rotation of that land did also come to shine in down through a second shaft.
And with this fresh new light his faintly glowing head shone all the brighter.

I was with pondering in my heart the significance of what I was being privileged to see, when my gaze under easy sail floated its way back down to the lovely mosaic *fleurs-de-lis* in the floor.

After a little while, I arose and went over to sit on a seat by a southerly facing window, for the sun was shinning there softly through.

I was now sitting on a seat by the wall beneath the *Third Station of the Cross* - Jesus falls the first time.

On my right, was the lightly coloured glass southerly facing window which had the following Latin words written on it from the top down.

VIRGO CLEMENS - DOMUS AUREA
ORA PRO NOBIS - ORA PRO NOBIS
VIRGO FIDELIS - SANCTA VIRGO VIRGINUM
ORA PRO NOBIS - ORA PRO NOBIS

To the right of the window was a purple curtained confessional of a lovely wooden design that had six wooden *fleurs-de-lis* spires on top.
And to the right of the confessional was a holy water font beneath the *Second Station of the Cross* - Jesus is made to bear his cross.

Above the Station was the eastern window of the church which had the following Latin words written on it from the top down.

STELLA MATUTINA - FEDERIS ARCA
ORA PRO NOBIS - ORA PRO NOBIS

The wooden seat on which I was sitting was most likely an original dating from the year 1826 when the church itself was built.
It measured about three meters (ten feet) in length and had these two wonderfully caved *fleurs-de-lis* on either end.

Sun was shinning in down on my right shoulder arm and hand through the words 'Virgo Fidelis and Sancta Virgo Virginum.'

The candles over away on the left before the statue of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux were softly glowing.
I felt she was happy with them.

In the center aisle, before the altar, and suspended from the ceiling, high south of the Smiling Winged Face, was in its golden ark, and in its scarlet glass jar the gently waving sanctuary candle.

From where I was sitting, the distance over from me to the altar was no more than seventeen meters (fifty-five feet).

And some thirteen meters (forty-three feet) a little over from me to my right was the Calvary that had before it a lone candle brightly shinning.
I wondered was anyone there even aware of its beautiful presence.

I thought it a little unusual that the six tall white candles; three on either side of the tabernacle were alight and brightly shinning.
They looked lovely in their high place.

Many thoughts were floating their way leisurely through my mind when I heard a key being turned in the sacristy door.

The door into the sacristy was in front of me, and a little to the left at a distance of some fifteen meters (fifty feet).

I looked in beyond by the great white Alpha Omega - 2004 Pascal Candle which to my surprise was also alight, and brightly shinning in its tall golden stand there before the sacristy door.
I saw the door slowly opening inward into the sacristy.

Surely, someone from the inside had unlocked it, I thought and had then opened it.

Yet, I couldn't see anyone immediately, and without any further thought assumed that it might have been either the sacristan or the parish priest who had opened it.
But to my surprise there was nobody there; nobody was walking through out into the altar area.

Then I thought for a moment, that perhaps a puff of wind had caused it to open, but very quickly dispelled that idea for the wind does not turn keys in locks.

I was about to go up and close it when I heard the faint sound of someone praying.
I knew no one had entered the church from the main door as it makes a distinctly creaking sound when its being opened and closed.

The praying ceased for a few moments before resuming again.

Perhaps someone was in the confessional I thought, but the sound didn't seem to be coming from that direction.
It felt rather as though it was coming from up about the altar or even from the sacristy.
But couldn't I clearly see that there was nobody there at all.

The faint sound of the praying came and went several times.
Yet, I still couldn't clearly identify its location.

Then, I thought I noticed someone moving about in the sacristy.
I thought I had seen someone's back; someone who was dressed in white.
So I waited to see could I see that person again.

And then I could easily recognise that there was a priest in the sacristy, standing with his back to me before a plain glass window and vesting himself to say mass.
He stood about two meters (six feet) tall and was well built.

Already he was wearing his alb and was now with putting on his white chasuble.
He had long wavy flowing black hair with seemingly some strains of silver in it.
From that alone, I assumed him to be perhaps in his mid-forties or thereabouts.

I was in for the shock of my life however, when he turned around.

Slowly, and with still praying away to himself, did he turn about.
He had his head slightly bowed forward and his hands prayerfully joined before him as he came through into the altar area and went and reverently kissed the candle lit altar.

There was no mistake about it.

I tell you that there was no mistake about it.

That man there before me all dressed in fine priestly attire was none other than me!
Yes, he was me; he was me for sure.

I couldn't believe what I was seeing.
Yes, he was me.
And as sure as the old wooden seat that was supporting me, and the praying coloured glass windows that were there about me, the priest who was now about to start mass, he was me.
Yes, yes, he was me.

I couldn't be certain if he noticed me or not, but I had this feeling that somehow he was fully aware of my presence.

He began to speak and the sound of his voice was my voice but a far more eloquent and beautiful variant of it.
He was speaking in such a manner as if he were addressing a church packed with people who had come there to celebrate mass with him.

He spoke as if the church was packed; packed galleries left, right, and off to the back, and even a packed doorway.

He seemed to be very happy to be before 'us' as he told us that today he was going to be celebrating the Solemnity of Corpus Christi.

I thought that bit unusual as the Solemnity of Corpus Christi was not until the next day.
It had always been celebrated on the Thursday, and even in more recent times it would be celebrated on the following Sunday with a great public procession.

With his speaking, I found myself with remembrance of when I was a young boy, holding my precious father's left hand as we walked in the great Corpus Christi procession down from Saint Patrick's Church Fermoy behind the Fermoy Brass & Reed Band; down through the happy town we would go with seeing all the windows along the route adorned with lovely religious paintings and statues of the Sacred Heart, and on around by the Royal Hotel in the square we would in a great wheel swing to head out north over the seven arched stone bridge, and then left into the old Deer Park where Benediction would be given on an elevated, easterly facing, crescent moon shaped concrete platform, on which a beautifully decorated altar would have been placed.

The main celebrant would be slowly walking under a wonderfully embroidered canopy held by men in white gloves, and he would be holding before him in his veiled hands within his white winged cope the golden monstrance, containing a large white Holy Communion.

Children all dressed in white would be out front strewing flower petals of many colours on the way.

And there would be the bearers of tall white candles that would be looking as if they were too shy to be burning in front of the shining sun.
Oh, and there would be the book bearer and corporal bearer too.

I would understand very little of what I was seeing, but all I knew for certain was that if my Daddy thought it was good for us to be there, then it was definitely something good that was taking place.

There would be this lovely scent of incense wafting in the air with the swinging from side to side of the thuribles.

How lovely would be the singing of the hymns.
In particular, my father who had a wonderful voice used love to be singing the Latin hymns for he had been once an altar boy and loved the beautiful sounds of Latin being sung.

Tantum Ergo Sacramentum

Tantum ergo sacramentum
Veneremur cernui:
Et antiquum documentum
Novo cedat ritui:
Praestet fides supplementum
Sensuum defectui.

Genitori, genitoque
Laus et iubilatio,
Salus, honor virtus quoque
Sit et benedictio:
Procedenti ab utroque
Compar sit laudatio.

And before the altar, the main celebrant would be slowly raising the beautiful monstrance containing the large white Holy Communion above the people, with wheeling it slowly about from left to right.
How gloriously it would be beaming in the sun when it came about into its view.

With remembrance I was of having seen the Latin writing "Gloria in Excelsis Deo" over the altar in Saint Patrick's Church, and again seeing it in a banner over the altar in the Park.
I used to wonder to myself what meaning did it carry.

And then when I asked, my father told me that it was from Latin, and that it came from the words "Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis." which had first been sung by angels of heaven to the shepherds who were keeping watch over their flock by night when baby Jesus was born in the little town of Bethlehem-Ephratah, in the land of Judah.

Oh, it was the lovely way he had of saying it.

"... in the little town of Bethlehem-Ephratah, in the land of Judah."

And with the sight of his smiling face in my heart, misty misty became my eyes.

He said the words meant,

"Glory to God in the Highest, and Peace save to all People of Good Will."

And when asked what was meant by 'good will' he explained that it meant, always to be with all one's heart thankfully accepting and harmonising with God's lovely love for me.

My father's words were lovely words.

It was with warmth in my heart that I was with those precious memories of proudly holding my father's hand, and walking beside him before the whole world.
Truly, he was one of the loveliest of people that I have ever known.
God is good to my father.

It was always lovely and sunny and warm on the Procession Day; one of the loveliest of days in my childhood years.

With pondering such memories, I asked myself where had all that faith in innocence gone; that innocence in faith.

The unseen congregation seemed to be listening to the Holy Father's every word spoken, and I too found myself not alone to be listening most carefully to his every word, but to the way he had of speaking them.
There was this quality of 'holiness' about him that was totally uncomplicated.

When I first entered the church and sat there in the pews, the silence was ever so quiet and soft, but the silence that was being experienced while the Holy Father was saying mass was truly truly quiet.
It was wonderful.
And as he was nearing the Liturgy of the Eucharist that wondrous silence became even more wondrous.
To say you could hear a pin drop would be to say that there was not yet a depth of silence reached.

To say you could hear a downy feather alight on the marble railing about the altar would be nearing the truth.

And then he uttered forth the sacred words of the consecration,

"… this is …"

Each word was weighted on his tongue before he let it wing forth.

I found myself being enraptured by his countenance and his demeanour.

Then something completely unexpected happened.

I have been attending masses all my life, but what I'm about to tell you now never have I witnessed before.

As he was uttering forth the sacred words,

"… my Body …"

didn't I clearly see wounds appearing in both his hands, and as much as I don't like to be describing such things, weren't both of them bleeding down on to the altar.

Now, if I were to think about such things before hand, I would be nauseated, and would want to run miles away from them.

But that morning, there on my knees in that glorious sun-drenched church before that saintly priest, I was completely at home.
I knew that I was in the right place and wanted to be there, for I felt that I had been somehow 'called' to be a witness to this happening.

Although the wounds in his hands were bleeding quite a lot, the Holy Father continued on with saying the sacred words of the mass.

If anybody else had such wounds as those of the Holy Father's, surely they would be roaring in agony or at least their pain would be wholly visible in their faces.
Yet, his countenance was like unto that of little child smiling into his mother's face.

As he was uttering the words,

"...this is the cup..."

didn't I suddenly become aware of these excruciating pains in my two hands, in my two feet and on my right hand side between my tenth and eleventh ribs.

I looked down at my hands, but there was no visible reason why I should be having such pains in them.

And the Holy Farther was with uttering,

"… of my Blood …"

when I felt my side but found no reason why I should be having such a pain in it.

I leant about and felt through my socks on both my feet, but found no reason there why I should be having such pains in them.

And with the Holy Father uttering a new arrangement to my ears of familiar words,

"…I do this in memory of me."

didn't I find myself looking over towards the Calvary, and what I saw there, terrified me more that anything I had hither seen, for there crucified on the cross with four crude, crude, crude, crude nails, and inlaid with a twisted thorny crown was me!

Yes, me!

Yes, there nailed on the cross; there nailed on the cross was a living breathing suffering me.
Yes, a living breathing suffering me was nailed on the cross, and above my head a sign affixed that read,

I don't know why, but with the whole scene, didn't tears of joy come cascading down my face.

How, how, how could I have been with such feelings I can't say, other than that there I was full of happiness at the consecration of the mass.

With the Holy Father slowly turning to ascend the two steps to the tabernacle, I noticed that there was a sizable blood patch on the right hand side of his chasuble about his lower ribcage.

I could clearly see his feet between the altar and the altar railing that he was barefoot.
And that he seemed to be having tremendous difficulty walking.

With raising his right foot to take the first step up, I noticed a similar wound to that which was in his hands, and that it was also bleeding quite a lot.
The left foot was with the same.

It seemed like an eternity for him to get from the tabernacle back down to the altar even though the distance between was only a mere three meters (ten feet) or thereabouts.

During this time, I began to experience the pain of all three of us at the very same time.

In all truth, I have no way of describing to you pain that is beyond all pain ever known, at least to me.
For not alone was I experiencing all in a moment the pain brought on by the wounds themselves, but besides, there were the all but overwhelming pains brought on by the wounds of humanity; pains upon pains brought on by the wounds of the planet.
Any further attempt to try and explain those pains would be futile.

With the Holy Father at the altar, Me on the cross, and me on my knees uttering in concord the sacred words,

"Our Father, who art in Heaven.
Hallowed be thy Name.
Thy Kingdom come.
Thy Will be done on Earth, as it is in Heaven.
Give us this day our daily Bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us,
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from all evil."

Didn't all the wounds miraculously disappear from us, and we were no longer feeling any pain.

I looked over for a moment towards the Calvary only to find that I was no longer on the cross.
The cross was vacant.

All that remained there were the four crude nails still driven into it where my hands and my feet use to be pinned.

An open-bowed entanglement of withered thorns lay on the floor next to bits and pieces of the "I N R I" sign.

A beautiful fragrance of lilies consumed the church.

The Holy Father holding the suborium piled high with consecrated hosts, came around to the front of the altar to distribute Holy Communion to the invisible congregation: invisible to my eyes.

I sat back up in the seat, and watched him distributing Holy Communion to his faithful congregation.

I hadn't noticed it at first, but every time the Holy Father seemingly placed a Holy Communion on the tongue of a kneeling communicant, it would disappear there in the air as if it had been consumed, for it would be no longer visible to my eyes.
Then each time he would reverently take out another from the suborium and do the very same.

His countenance had this wondrous peace in it; had a smile in it that was pure religion in itself.

His uttering to each communicant of the words,
"Corpus Christi."

Though barely audible from were I was seated, sounded melodiously beautiful.

Then he stopped and slightly bowed his head forward, and remained in that position praying for a few moments.
He had finished giving out Holy Communion and was with turning about to return back up to the altar when he paused and looked over my way.

It was the first time that I was fully aware that he was aware of my presence in the church.

He smiled and I knew, yes, I knew there and then that whatever bothersome feelings I had been having of late about receiving Holy Communion were now about to depart.

With courage welling up within me, I reverently went up to receive Holy Communion.

There before the Holy Father, I brought myself down on my knees on the first marble step.
The Holy Father was standing on the second.

Slowly, I raised my head up and looked into the Holy Father's eyes; I looked up into his lovely soft green eyes as he was raising up the consecrated host before his face and mine. His soul was as pure and as bright as the Wings of the Morning Sun.
I felt that he always knew me and I he.

And he uttered unto me the words,

"Corpus Christi."

At those very words, didn't the heating pipe beneath my shins begin to violently rattle and clangour!
By on and by on was every pipe and radiator about the church most violently rattling and clangouring.
And the Voice in Absence scoffed at me,

"Ecce, the cannibal!"

And I was given the strength of willpower not to heed the Voice in Absence, but to listen to the voice of the Holy Father. And the Holy Father in Presence uttered unto me the truth behind the given truth, with,

"Corpus Solaris."

And thus willingly was I able to receive, and with partaking did thankfully reply,

"Amen."

The chalice was now in his hands.

And he uttered unto me the words,

"Sanguis Christi."

At those very words didn't the heating pipe beneath my shins again begin to violently rattle and clangour.
By on and by on was every pipe and radiator about the church most violently rattling and clangouring.

The golden ark above our heads was swinging round and round at a considerable speed in an ever-widening path.
And the Voice in Absence scoffed at me,

"Ecce, the bloodsucker!"

And I was given the strength of willpower not to heed the Voice in Absence, but to listen to the voice of the Holy Father.
And the Holy Father in Presence uttered unto me the truth behind the given truth, with,

"Sanguis Solaris."

And thus willingly was I able to receive, and with partaking did thankfully reply,

"Amen."

And I was with great contentment; the contentment of being at home.

For an eternity I had been immured and positioned by balance in a secret place deep in the depths of a planted pyramid of Egypt, and with no knowledge of a way out.

I was hidden like a candle beneath an upturned stoneware bowl within an upturned stoneware bowl, and save for two hairpin sun-aligned shafts my flame would have long since been quenched.

I was made to be hidden away from the world, and now I was in the world hidden.

Rising to my feet, and returning to the seat by the wall, I reposed my face in my hands for quite overcome I had been by the whole experience.

Therein my elliptical sky saw I, the Greatness of the Universe, and in its greatness knew I me.

Tears of thanks, tears of joy came flooding out between my fingers.

And there within heard I, imbued with the spirit of authority, the mellifluous voice of the Holy Father speak unto my heart.

"Be consistent in prayer for the Voice in Absence has been very close to you of late."

With coming forth from my sky, lo the Holy Father no longer could see I.

There was this lovely scent of candle wax evanescing in the air.

Everything was as it had been when I entered the church; everything was sublime and serene.

Lovely withal were the red flowers about the beautiful golden crucifix above the tabernacle.

Withal there in patient waiting were the six tall noble candles, be they three on either side of the tabernacle.

The guardian angles were all in their natural state of respectfulness.

Withal were the flowers of many colours in their pretty receptacles on the royal red carpet about the altar.

And upon the altar were two large white and two small red candles in patient waiting.

Everything was as it had been save for the candles by the statue of Saint Thérèse and the one before the Calvary.

I was about to take my leave when I heard the main door opening, and the happy sounds of familiar voices.

The faithful ladies that faithfully clean the church and put new fresh flowers about the altar and shrines had arrived. Always they have the church looking immaculate; looking so very very beautiful.

Seeing that I felt a bit shy about interrupting them in their sacred art, I silently gave thanks for their great generosity in helping to recreate and recreate the beauty of that sacred place.

Quietly and reverently they went about their immemorial cares.
And back in the sacristy they enjoyed chatting away about; about I knew not what for they spoke with the sense of presence.

I prayed many blessings be upon them, and upon their families, and upon their generations.

With great peace of mind and thankfulness of heart, I took to leaving the church.
Having been invited to contemplate myself, I had been given to find myself.
And in being given to find myself, I had been given to find the truth behind the given truth.
And that truth has always been with me.

With emerging through the doorway, a playful swallow flew up out above my head, and I smiled at him as he carried my gaze up to meet the lovely warm rays of Sun emerging through some white clouds.

And spoke I warmly unto Sun with saying,

"Oh, Radiant Raiment,
Thou has been in my beginning,
is now,
and ever shall in my days here be.
Ramble I thankfully, and joyfully,
on along with Thee.
Thou art the Bread of Life,
The Bread of Life be Thee;
Thee in Thy company the Bread of Lives be."

And then these words did ray smile unto my heart,

"My Body in thee is meat indeed,
and My Blood in thee is drink indeed.
This be thee in remembrance always of Me.
Worship thee not Me nor
be given to praising thee Me.
Remember, that thee abideth in Me.
I AM thy nightly consecrated Eucharist.
Receive Me thus each and every morn with full thankfulness of heart.
And know, that My joyfulness in thee is the fruit of thy thankfulness."

Oh, how lovely be the Light in my face.

Annotations:

Writing in windows -

Virgo Clemens - Virgin most merciful
Domus Aurea - House of gold
Ora Pro Nobis - Pray for us
Virgo Fidelis - Virgin most faithful
Sancta Virgo Virginum - Holy Virgin of virgins

Stella Matutina - Morning Star
Federis Arca - Ark of the Covenant
Ark of the Love-relationship

I N R I - from Latin meaning, "IESVSNAZARENVSREXIVDAEORVM" -

"(This one here for all the world to see is) Jesus of Nazareth,
the King of the Jews."

Words that were said to have been ordered by the Roman Governor Pontius Pilatus to be written on a sign to be affixed on Jesus' cross.

The sign is also said to have included the same arcane message in Greek and Hebrew.

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Chapter **13** *A my a homeland*

Glorious sun shinning down five afternoons ago, found me sitting on the rocky county bounds between Tipperary and Waterford.

The crumbling old stone county bounds is over a meter (four feet) in width and a meter (three feet) in height, and along that stretch there runs from west to east.
At my right foot was a rock that had a shape in it like the letter 'w' or a wave of the sea.

And the words 'Welcome' and 'Wondrous' came to mind, for truly welcoming and wondrous was the view from where I was sitting.

Away off to the north stretched the beautiful county of Tipperary with miles and miles of lovely fields of different shades of green and golden.

Off to the near east was the western slope of the Knockmealdowns.
A flock of sheep were strolling up to a grassy patch beyond a mound of green fern.

Soft wispy white clouds were now and then coming in dancing over the top of the hill.

White woolly sheep in the green below, I in the medium, and the white wispy clouds in the sky above.

Wind was gently blowing my hair over my face to the south.

Away off in the distance to the south could be seen stretching for miles the lovely wooded county of Waterford.

And some kind of longing within me caused me to arise from where I was, and to set off strolling southwards.

I was about to make my way down along by the county bounds to the road below, when from out of nowhere, a handsome thrush came and alighted on the bounds in front of me.

He seemed to be very anxious about something, and I felt that he wanted me to see it.
He flew a few yards south and then came back again to the bounds.
He done this three times, and on the fourth didn't I take to following him.

He flew before me singing away to himself, and in a tone that was less upset than when he had been singing to me back on the bounds.

He lead me to this stone hut, that may have been used in former times for the watering and the resting of the horses that had been drawing carts all the way up from the county Tipperary.
In modern times, the front of the hut had been extended a little, and now a stone altar had been placed within it.

With coming about in front of it, that is its eastern face, I noticed that someone had placed an old tattered book on the altar, for it had a stone on top of it to prevent it from being blown away in the wind.
Naturally, I assumed that it was most likely a religious book left behind by some wandering pilgrim of the hills as a token of some blessing having been bestowed.

Having a tremendous love for the written word, I leaned in between the bars of the rusty wrought iron gate that stands there before the altar to take one read of it, and with the intention of replacing it again carefully back in its place on the altar.

Mo bhrón, wasn't it shocked I was to discover what book it was that someone had placed there on the altar.

It was a book of some bulk without any cover and many of its pages were badly faded due to the weather.
I knew it to have been a fairly modern edition due to the binding.

One read of the last few lines on its last page, and I could immediately recognise whose infamous work it was that was now in my hands.

"…
When?
Going to dark bed there was a square round Sinbad the Sailor roc's auk's egg in the night of the bed of all the auks of the rocs of Darkinbad the Brightdayler.
Where? "

I was so upset that without any thought I flung it down into the ferns way below.
It didn't even flutter in the wind, so it didn't, and dropped like a stone into the ferns.

I was about to walk away from that place when I noticed on the ground, at the foot of the pedestal on which stands there a very forlorn looking statue of Our Lady of Knock, a tattered book, and like what had been done with the one on the altar, there was a stone laid on top of it to prevent it from being blown away.

Rather than a whole book it appeared to be more like the chapter of a book.
I picked it up, and found it to be in very poor condition as it had been out in the weather probably for quite some time.
I could make out the following few words of its first page.

"Yes because he never did a thing like that before as ask to get his breakfast in bed with a couple of eggs since the City Arms hotel when he used to be pretending to be …"

Skipping on to its last page I read of the following few concluding lines.

"…another and then I asked him with my eyes to ask again yes and then he asked me would I yes to say yes my mountain flower and first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes. "

Immediately, I could recognise whose infamous chapter it was that I was now trying to read.

It was definitely the last chapter of that tattered book that had been deliberately placed on the altar, for the binding style, and the font not to mention the page sequence identically matched.

Without taking any further time to think over things, didn't I fling it down in the same direction as the rest of the book.
It floated itself way down in between the ferns seeing that it was very light.

Feeling a bit faint, and a little annoyed with myself for having thrown a book, even a tattered book away like that, I sat myself down on the grass before the statue.

The sheep were still grazing away over on the far off eastern hillside.

I tried to imagine the mindset of the person who had deliberately placed the two sections of the book; one on the altar and the other below Our Lady of Knock's statue.
What kind of message was he or she trying to give to the world?

I asked myself, how could it have come about that such a literary genius as the author, could have been so totally misinformed and misguided by his family, his teachers and by the cultural milieu of his day to write such content.
How much more admirably wonderful would it have been, if he had been cultured or even tried to culture himself in the lore of the core I thought.

With these and many other thoughts, questions, and silences, I found myself thinking of the tattered remains of the book that were now below me there in the ferns.
I didn't like the thought of them being even there in the lovely pure ferns, and decided to go down, and find them, and take them down with me to the road, and dump them in the litterbin.
But I decided against doing that as I didn't want to contaminate the litterbin.
Well honestly, wasn't it a hard heart I was having at the time?

After finding the two sections of the book, I reunited them and headed on off up the slope behind the statue for quite a distance, until I happened upon a movable boulder under which to bury it.

Having rolled the boulder away, I placed the tattered remains of the book there in the boulder's nest.
I took some ferns and laid them on top of it before rolling the boulder over on to it.

Looking down at the boulder I thought to myself, that barring any human intervention that boulder would still be there in a hundred and even two hundred years time.

There once was a genius who had been born into misinformation and misguidance, I lamented.

"Long live the genus!" proclaimed I in my heart.

And with those very words, didn't a thought flash through my mind, that what if I had found there on the altar and at the foot of the pedestal not a fairly recent copy of his work as I had, but instead an original copy of it, what would I have done with it.

Of course, I would have been quite upset as I had been, but I would have acted more thoughtfully.
I would surely have carefully brought it home with me, and would be keeping it for my generations in all safety, and would delight too in sharing a view of it with those whose hearts would be open to appreciate the wonder of original things.

For what is original, although I might not be inclined to agree with its content, I would be having a great respect and admiration for it, and for the creative originality and determination of its author.
Blessed be the venerable librarian of Carraig an Éide to be.

With carefully making my way back down the slope, didn't I hear the singing of not one thrush but a host of thrushes.

I looked around and up, but I couldn't see them.

With standing between the altar and the statue, didn't I once more look up, and there about my head flying about in a circle was a flock of lovely thrushes.
They sounded very pleased as they flew off away to the south.

I looked up at the statue, and it was my impression that she looked happy.

Making my way down along I was soon standing on the R668 which runs from the town of Lismore, in the county Waterford up over the mountain pass, and down into the village of Clogheen, in the Barony of Iffa and Offa West, in the county Tipperary.
Oh, it is surely one of the loveliest of mountain routes with its meandering away 'neath an abundance of canopying trees.

For a moment, I played with the idea of taking a stroll over the border into Tipperary, and stroll down the old road to The Lough or as some call it Bay Lough, but decided to leave that adventure for another day.
I took instead to strolling south along the R668.

So many thoughts of how this area must have been like in former times were floating through my mind.
I thought of how difficult it must have been; how very very difficult it must have been for the cart-drawing horses coming up from Clogheen.

How happy they would have been to reach the top, where they would receive water and rest.
Fresh horses would from there be taking the carts on down to Lismore.

Life must have been very difficult for horses back then compared to those of nowadays that spend there days in great rich fields of find grass.
And isn't it well and lovely, that it is so.

But oh, how much lovelier still it would be to be seeing horses running wild and free in the mountains, instead of being forced to awkwardly run with a metal bit in their mouths about nicely painted curving fences.
For horses in their natural state don't be bothered with such meaningless concerns as winning over another.

All the fun and excitement in the mountains is to be found in the hard fast running with your friends on either side of you and the wind in nostrils and streaming past ears and through manes along the back and up through tails.

Should one for a while take a certain liking to want to be running out front, then that would be find too, for eventually wouldn't everyone be enjoying such an experience, even for a few minutes.

And when the great running would slow down and reduce itself to a strolling and a grazing, one would still be in the company of one's friends, and that is all that would be of the utmost concern.

With such thoughts, didn't I find myself gazing over to the west at a bountiful cover of rhododendrons before a grove of fir trees.
The setting looked so beautiful.

Then a little further on, I noticed also off to my right the stone ruins of a shepherd's hut sticking up out of the trees like some ancient Mayan temple.

I thought of shepherds being huddled there together about an open hearth in the long cold, wet, foggy, wintery nights.
I thought of all the great stories they must have been telling each other.
I thought of them with lanterns in hand out searching for sheep that had somehow lost sight of the flock.

With such thoughts, I strolled on upon my way, and as I did so, didn't I hear emitting from the direction of the hut something akin to very soft tones in echo form.

They were not the chirping of birds.

They were like; they were like the handiwork of sunlight playing on the roof and about the walls of the hut itself.
Simply beautiful to listen to, so they were.

Soon, I came upon a spot that had a rocky road leading off down to the right, and away into the woods.
Before me was a stone bridge o'er a mountain stream that was flowing down from my left and off over down southwards at the other side of the road.
One would hardly know it was a bridge for its wall was very low.

With taking an interest in the design of the bridge, I strolled over and down a little to the right, until I had reached the edge of the stream.

The stream with its hazel hued bed was delightfully sparkling its way down the hillside and along by a fir wood.

Looking east, I could see that the bridge was a single arched stone bridge and of a pleasing design.
I sat there beside the stream and just enjoyed its singing.

With watching the waters flowing through the archway, I noticed that there was a dry area on the southern side of the archway.
I don't know why, but I felt this sudden delight to want to walk beneath the bridge.

On one a two and a three a stepping-stones, and I was on the opposite side of the stream.
I approached the arch from that side.

With carefully easing myself down, I made my way walking along the dry side under the archway.
There was this wonderfully adventurous feeling about the crossing.

Midway, I paused to examine the ceiling of the arch, and found it to be in fairly good condition, save for a single opening where a patch of mortar must have fallen away at some time.

It was a great feeling emerging through on the other side; the other side being the eastern side.

I was delighted to discover a lovely grassy diamond-shaped isle in the middle of the stream.

There on the isle, I decided to take a rest for a while.

It was so beautiful to be sitting there in the warm sunshine, with having the gurgling waters passing down on either side of me.

Feeling a bit tired after the long walk down from the county bounds, I lay my head on a cushy green tuft of grass having pretty yellow and white flowers.

With falling into a lovely nap I was away away in my own world.

I hadn't been asleep, surely a few minutes, when I heard this truly beautiful music dancing in the air.
It was like no other music that I had ever heard before.

With raising myself up on my elbow, I looked up along the down coming stream, and my eyes caught sight of a most wondrous scene.

There sitting on a rock on the northern bank of the stream, was if may be permitted to say, an angel of full age. And the angel of full age having golden wings, and all attired in white, was playing ever so delicately four richly endowed purplebell stalks as one would softly strum a harp.

The beautiful fingers airily moving up and down the bells was creating a most harmonious and delightful sound.

The smile upon the face of the angel was like unto the sun at eventide.

Long along along while did the angel play the purplebell harp, and never once repeating even a single sequence of notes.
It was truly wondrous.

With listening to that beautiful music, I noticed something white off to the west, moving along the top of the mountain ridge, over beyond the head of the angel.

At first, I took it to be a cloud or some kind of a light, but the more I watched it, I felt it resembled that of a white horse.

With reaching the highest point on the ridge, didn't the 'white horse' stretch out two great wings and began to glide down over the mountainside to where the angel and I were located.

With its nearing, I could see that it was no white horse, but rather a magnificent white elk.

Gently he came to alight on the grass a little over from the angel.
In a moment the angel was seated on his back, and was gesturing to me to come over to them.

I rose to my feet, and stepped on to two stepping-stones.

I was now passing beneath the elk's great antlers.
It was like passing underneath the branches of a great oak tree.

The angel reached down to grab hold of my left hand, and before I knew it, I found myself on the broad cushy back of the elk, seated behind the angel.

Then the elk's great wings started to extend, and with the least amount of effort we were now airborne.

I looked down and could see the meandering stream passing beneath the bridge and on down the hillside by the fir wood.
I could see the whole hill country, and indeed it looked most beautiful.

The angel's long auburn hair about my face was of a fragrance like unto fresh honeysuckle of a late eve in June.

I was enjoying the blueness of the high sky, when don't ask me how, for I know not how, but in a moment weren't we over a land though similar to the beautiful isle of Éire, was not itself Éire.

We were coming in over a spectacular port city that stretched for kilometers inland.

We were coming in to alight in a great public square in the center of a huge unknown, yet, somehow vaguely familiar metropolis.

With dismounting, the angel spoke to me for the very first and only time.

"Welcome Risteárd Mac Suibhne Uí Éire to the beautiful Cathair Isabéaltollán."

I had never heard of the City of Isabéaltollán nor knew not in which land it was located.
I politely thanked the angel, and said how delighted I was to be in such a beautiful place, and among such a beautiful people.

The people who were coming and going in the square were definitely of a different era altogether from my own, for their raiment and the surrounding architecture of their buildings were not of my time.

I noticed not a single unhappy countenance among them.

Every one who passed by us smiled and greeted us in a language I understood not, yet felt it to be reaching without any hindrance into my heart.

And I was back mounted on the great white elk with the angel, and we were out over the Bay of Isabéaltollán.

I was with seeing, and I couldn't believe what I was actually seeing to be so, but didn't I see the whole spectacular City of Isabéaltollán ascend seemingly of its own accord way up by us into the high sky and out of sight.

I saw it surely with my own eyes.
And I was speechless.

Looking down, I could see no opening in the sea where the City of Isabéaltollán had been; there was no rising or mighty undulating of the waters.

Where the spectacular City of Isabéaltollán had been just a few moments earlier there was now all but beautiful sea.

In the distance, I could see a shore line were the City had separated itself from the mainland, and the shape left behind there all along was that of a crescent moon.

I was completely lost for words.
And the angel all the while remained serenely silent.

I counted beneath us seven long sailboats with a normal complement of people on board sailing along.
They were heading out of where the Bay of Isabéaltollán used to be, and entering into an area of the sea that appeared to be of a slightly lighter blue than the surrounding waters.

And there therein they did set sail due northwards, judging from the position of the sun over my left shoulder.

For a long time we seemed to be holding a position above them, and from time to time they would be waving up to us, and we in turn waving down to them.

Then in an instant, we were all alone flying in the vastness of a starry night sky.

I was enjoying the majesty of the Milky Way when, and don't ask me how, for I know not of a how, but weren't we coming in with a golden dawn over the beautiful isle of Éire.

How truly wonderful it was to be seeing again its mountains, fields, and rivers, for in our night journey hadn't I been wondering to myself, if I would ever again see the isle of Éire.
Had it too I wondered like the City of Isabéaltollán ascended into the high sky and was no more to be seen.

Soon we were alighting on the grassy patch beside where the angel had earlier been playing the beautiful music on the purplebells.

With dismounting, the angel smiled down to me.
I smiled up in return with thankfulness of heart, and gently stroke beside me the front left leg of the elk.

In a moment they were airborne and heading away eastwards up to where I had first noticed the white light moving along the ridge.

When they were no longer in my sight, I came back up onto the R668 and strolled leisurely on south with the singing of the mountain stream below me to the right.

As I was strolling along with the memories of where I had been with the angel on the magnificent white flying elk, I happened upon a recent small rockslide on the left hand side of the road.

I love finding such natural presentations, for there are so many interesting things to be looking at, from the different kinds of rock formations to the structure of roots, and there is always the possibility of discovering something that hasn't seen daylight for hundreds of years or even thousands.

I was enjoying carefully picking up this piece of rock and that thread of root, when my eye caught sight of an almond-shaped slab of rock beneath a canopy of heather and ferns; an unknown rock type never before seen by my eyes, that measured about forty-five centimeters (eighteen inches) in length, twenty (eight) in width and having a thickness of about twelve (five).

It was in two halves.

The upper half was only about five centimeters (two inches) thick and it had slid about an inch down beyond the lower half.

Delicately I removed the top half to see what I would see. I couldn't believe the weight of it for its size; it was preternaturally heavy.

What I had been expecting to see was the different inner designs of the slab, and if I was very fortunate, maybe some plant or even insect fossils.

It was surely my day, for there in the lower half of the almond-shaped slab were not alone beautiful natural designs of the inner slab itself to be seen, which according to colour shade, subtly resembled the greenish hue of eclogite, albeit not a slab of eclogite - but also there were three, if I'm not mistaken, three cooksonia-like plant fossils, and one of a butterfly; yes, one of a metalmark butterfly in every detail and colour which were also vaguely mirrored in the upper half of the slab.

And there was something else there in the lower half of the slab that was beyond my greatest expectations.

I know you're going to have difficulty believing this, but I'm telling you, that there between the fossils of the tiny plants, and that of the beautiful butterfly was embedded in the slab

something of a mineral quality that I can only best describe as being like unto a sublime amulet depicting in colour some special scene.
And like the little plants and the butterfly it was also vaguely mirrored in the upper half of the slab.

It appeared to me as if the amulet had been the most recent of the ancient visitors to take up residence in the rock, while the little plants would have been there the longest.

The beautiful amulet measured about ten centimeters (four inches) in width by about fourteen (five and a half inches) in length, and the lower part of it was softly glistening in the sunlight.

I couldn't believe what I was seeing, for there in the pictured amulet was clearly for my eyes to see, seven long sailboats, identical to the ones that I had seen with the angel from the back of the elk above the waters beyond where the City of Isabéaltollán once had been.

In the pictured amulet in the slab, people seemed to be pulling their boats ashore on to some unknown land.
The sky therein having some wispy white clouds was of a soft blue fading into yellow down to the horizon o'er the sea that was itself of a blueness that did even glisten in the sun of my own presence.

With glancing back at its sky, I noticed a detail that was not seemingly a cloud.

Oh, wasn't it the magnificent white flying elk that had bore the angel and I faraway and safely back again; flying in the wispy white clouds high above the shore.

And then I noticed a very special detail.

To my great surprise and delight, there sitting on a rock above the shore playing purplebells was the very angel that I had seen earlier back up the road playing the purplebells by the meandering stream.
And I knew then; yes, I knew then in that very moment the land therein to be the Land of Éire.

I began to consider what was I going to do with my unique find.
I reasoned that I could when I returned home contact the curator of one of the many fine museums here on the isle, and tell them of the wondrous discovery.
I could come back later and carefully take it home with me, and there be keeping it for my generations in all safety.
And I could delight too in freely sharing a view of it with those whose hearts would be open to appreciate the wonder of such things.

With such rolling thoughts, I rose to my feet and went and sat on the roadside wall to view things from a distance. I was there awhile weighting up the considerations open to me, when along came Daniel the postman in his van and pulled up beside me.

"Lovely afternoon, Richard, isn't it thank God?"

"Thank God it is indeed Daniel."

Daniel switched off the engine, and came out and sat on the wall chatting with me.

For over forty years, Daniel has been a postman in these parts, and knows well the whole countryside and everybody who was living, and is living in the place like the backs of his hands.

"Daniel, I'm in a bit of a dilemma, honestly."

"How so Richard?

"Well I found something in a slab of rock there that is of great historical value, and I want to bring the find to the attention of some museum here on the isle, but I don't know which one I should contact."

"They're all sound Richard, but no doubt some are probably sounder than others."

"Would you like to see my discovery, Daniel?"

"Great Richard for something new is always very welcome."

We crossed the road, and went up to where I had made the find.

Carefully, I removed the upper half of the slab, but was I in for a surprise.

"What do you make of that Daniel?"

"All I can see Richard are a few tiny plant-like fossils and one of a butterfly.
Are these very rare Richard?"

"They are indeed Daniel for they are extremely old.
And what do you make of the colourful amulet there Daniel?"

"I'm sorry Richard, but I don't see any colourful amulet therein, unless you mean by the designs in the slab itself.
I remember Richard when I was a teenager finding this absolutely pristine fossil of some kind of shellfish in a piece of red sandstone near the summit of Galtee Mór.
I still have it safe at home."

With coming down from the rockslide and sitting on the wall, Daniel told me some wonderful stories about the hidden places in the land about, before heading on home.

"Daniel thanks a million."

"You're welcome Richard.
Anytime I'll see you about I'll be stopping as usual, and 'tis the fine chat we'll be having about the places, the people and the times of this grand old region."

"That'll be great Daniel.
Slán abhaile. Safe home."

I stood there and watched as Daniel's green post van sailed away down the meandering road.

Well at least I knew now, that there would be no point in I contacting any of the museums, for no one would be able to see what I was seeing.
For if it wasn't given for Daniel to see, neither I concluded would it be given for others to see.

I went back up and carefully removed the two halves of the slab in case of any further rock sliding, and went and hid them a little ways to the south beneath some ferns.
I would be in a little while carrying them home for safekeeping.
Oh, the weight of them!

I continued on strolling down the R668 with pondered in my heart all that I had been given to see, and what the significance of all might be.

It was quite some time before I reached the lay-by where I had parked my beautiful, shinning, slate-grey carriage.

There I sat for some time on a low concrete capped stonewall.
Behind me was the wonderful Scots Pine grove with its abundance of rhododendrons.
And lovely was the sound of a stream to my left coming down by way of the grove and carrying on down the valley.

I let my gaze pan slowly about from the southeast, south, southwest and about to the west, and the scene was truly memorable.

With a lovely refreshing early evening breeze there came before my eyes for a brief moment the many smiling faces of the people of the beautiful City of Isabéaltollán.

With boarding my beautiful carriage, I slowly drove back up the road to collect the fern-hidden slab.

Oh, how a beautiful be a this a my a homeland with its eventide sun in the blue dome of heaven.

Annotations:

purplebells - namely the Folksglove/Foxglove flower - Digitalis purpurea

eclogite - from Latin 'ecloga' meaning, 'a fine selection'
A rock consisting of granular red garnet, light green smaragdite, and common hornblende; so called in reference to its beauty.
Eclogite rocks contain minerals that indicate they have been buried to great depths in the Earth's crust.

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~ ~ ~ ~ ≈ *sailing on* ♪

Chapter **14** *A Q at the eleventh*

While I was flying as a bird last Sunday afternoon, above and about the Hill of Corrin, which is located south of the town of Fermoy, I happened upon two very beautiful, happy lovers who were laying on an oyster coloured rug hand in hand, and looking up at the lovely sky.

With alighting close by, I could appreciate that their words were on that of the wondrous sky.

So lovely was the sweetness of their words for each other, and the sensitivity of their listening for each other, that I felt if I were to sing, it would surely be an intrusion on the way of beauty sublime.

In this Edenic setting, one of them with the greatest of ease and honesty happened to comment that the lovely sky appeared to be of a very fine azure blue, while the other with the greatest of ease and honestly took the position that it appeared to be more of a delicate sky-blue blue.

Within a split sec]-[ond they were netted in an argument with each other over the colour of the sky.

I couldn't believe how quickly this had developed.
It was quicker than the tipping of a wing tip.

Within minutes their body structure had grown to an enormous size.
I had just about enough time to take to the safety of the air.

They had become two mighty giants, and two very ugly looking giants at that.

Two giants armed with two doubled edged swords: a husband and his wife or if you prefer a wife and her husband were now having an almighty battle with each other there on top of the Hill of Corrin.

They were roaring at each other as they wielded and thrust their swords.

With the meetings of the swords, sparks would go bolting up into the sky.
I had to really take a lot of care in such a hostile environment.

Sparks of ...

!!! blissful expectations !!!
!!! different role expectations !!!
!!! money !!!
!!! poor communication !!!

!!! relatives !!!

!!! religion !!!

!!! philosophy !!!

And a whole host of other !!! sparks of … !!! went bolting their way skywards several times over.

She made two massive swipes at his head, only to miss it.
Instead, she managed to completely dislodge, and send the large stone crucifix and its pedestal that have stood there on top of the hill for these passed seventy-one years, flying off down over the countryside to the east.

On and on went the terrible clashing of the swords and the bolting of the sparks.

Even reposing Mogh Ruith who according to the stories is reputedly to be buried there deep under the cairn atop of the hill must have been very much annoyed by their actions.

Then suddenly, both of them wielded and thrust their swords so strongly at each other that they simultaneous with vibrating shock knocked the swords right out of each other's hands.

Immediately, they took to the throwing of jagged red sandstone rocks from the cairn at each other.

I had to really take a lot of care in such a hostile environment.

There were rocks of …

??? criticism???
??? defensiveness ???
??? putdowns ???
??? blaming ???
??? feelings of not being cared for ???
??? feelings of not being listened to ???
??? going off the topic ???
??? complaints ???
??? insults ???
??? plethora of name-calling ???
??? contempt ???
??? mocking ???
??? rolling eyes ???
??? counter-attacking ???
??? interrupting ???
??? denying everything ???
??? making excuses ???
??? threats ???

And besides, many more ??? rocks of ??? were pelted at each other.

Eventually, she managed to hit him in the right spot in his chest that caused him to go staggering to the ground.

Thereupon, she raced over holding a huge rock above her head, and with every intention of bringing it crashing down on his defenceless head when he just barely managed to land a powerful kick into her left waist that sent her screaming, rolling, and tumbling head over heels down the hillside.

Down the hillside he quickly ran after her with clamouring away all the while.

Upon reaching the bottom, she managed to rise to her feet, and with ripping trees from their home in the hillside was swinging them so powerfully at him that she caused him to trip and tumble right down on to the N8 highway.

Cars, trucks and buses coming from both directions with brakes slammed were screeching and flipping over this way and that way with trying to avoid him.
Many however, slammed right into him that had the effect of making him even angrier.

He rose to his feet, and with stretching out his mighty arms, he caught the edges of the road with his hands and pulled it like you would a carpet.
The rippling on effect reached all the way over up to the village of Watergrasshill off to the south.

Every vehicle along that way was tossed into the surrounding fields, like breadcrumbs off a tablecloth.

While he was doing this, she picked up two roadside houses and flung them with a terrifying force at his back.

Both of the houses smashed to pieces upon impact.

He turned about with a great anger in his face, while she had already taken to running as fast as she could northwards over towards the town of Fermoy.

With reaching the town, she ripped off the spires of both the Catholic and Protestant churches and flung them like javelins at him.
Both of them went whistling through the air on target to put his eyes out, but instead lodged themselves in his earlobes.

The pain caused him to let out a most monstrous roar that was surely heard off in the far away Galtee Mountains.

With quickly recovering his composure, he ripped out both of the church spires, and ran down to the bank of the Blackwater River between the BUPA Ireland building and the old rusty train viaduct.

There, he pulled and pulled the river back to him from beneath the seven-arched stone bridge, all the way up beyond Castlehyde House, Cregg Castle, and to the outskirts of Ballyhooly, and coiled it like a rope about her neck.

She began to stumble and fall under the weight of it.

By this time, he had quickly run across some fields and uprooted the tower castle of Cloughleagh, over near the village of Kilworth.

He was about to bring it crashing down with all the force he could muster on her bosom, when she managed somehow to raise and direct her right foot with a mighty force and accuracy up into his treasured vault, which sent him like a rocket shooting into the sky.

Freeing herself from her river entanglements, she rose to her feet.

As he was dropping back to earth, he had somehow got hold of a thundercloud, and sent it hurdling right down on top of her.

Although she was absolutely drenched, she was very much refreshed, and ready to do even greater battle.

She raced back up to the Hill of Corrin to retrieve her sword.
He was in fast pursuit right behind her.

Having reached the location of their fallen swords at the very same time, they were about to lay hold on the handles, when a soft gentle voice on a breeze made its way down from the highest heavens to their ears, calling,

"Love~one~another~and~make~not~an~evil~of~Love.
Love~one~another~and~make~not~an~evil~of~Love.
Love~one~another~and~make~not~an~evil~of~Love."

And in that very moment of grace, they were again given to truthfully finding themselves in the hues of each other's eyes.

They decreased in bodily size to their normal size, and strangely, greater did appear to be their beauty and their love for each other.

They were again as a happily married couple as if the battle that had been was as normal an activity as the playfulness of two river ducks.

All on the hilltop, and all in the far and near surrounding was completely restored.

The cars, trucks and buses on the N8 were travelling along at their regular pace.
The Blackwater River was meandering its way peacefully along before Castlehyde House and on through the town of Fermoy with its two nicely spired churches.
And off towards the village of Kilworth was faithfully standing Cloughleagh castle.

The two lovers with the oyster coloured rug about their shoulders strolled off westwards along the hill; westwards along the hill they strolled higher up into the beautiful Nagles Mountains.

And in the distance, they could see their children happily running towards them.

Great were their tears of thankfulness and delight at the sight of their children, and with running to meet them, they picked them up in their arms and whirled about with seeing them up against the background of the lovely blue sky.

Oh, how lovely be all the smiling faces.

While strolling as a man, I made my way down the Calvary Pathway that is the southern descent from the hilltop.

And with passing the Eleventh Station, I put to myself this question,

'Who do I say I am?'

Although the question was clear and profound, no answer came to reveal itself to me at that time.

Upon reaching the foot of the hill, I boarded my carriage with the warmth of sun upon my brow, and the greater and the more appreciative the love in my heart for my Precious and our Lovelies.

And with driving along, didn't the *Lovers' Garden* namely the *Canticle of Canticles* find itself in part and in enhancement, sprightly dancing on my tongue all the lovely meandering way home.

Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth for thy love is better than wine.
Thine ointments have a goodly fragrance; thy name is as ointment poured forth.

Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon; for why should I be as one that veileth herself beside the flocks of thy companions?

I have compared thee, O my love, to a steed in Ra's chariots.
Thy cheeks are comely with circlets, thy neck with beads.

We will make thee circlets of gold with studs of silver.

While the king sat at his table, my spikenard sent forth its fragrance.
My beloved is unto me as a bag of myrrh that lieth betwixt my breasts.
My beloved is unto me as a cluster of henna in the vineyards.

Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thine eyes are as doves.
Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant; also our couch is leafy.
The beams of our houses are cedars, and our panels are cypresses.

I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys.
As a lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.
As an apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons.
Under its shadow I delighted to sit, and its fruit was sweet to my taste.
He hath brought me to the banqueting-house, and his banner over me is love.

Stay ye me with dainties, refresh me with apples; for I am love-sick.

Let his left hand be under my head, and his right hand em-brace me.

Hark!
My beloved!
Behold, he cometh, leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.
My beloved is like a gazelle or a young hart; behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh in through the windows, he peereth through the lattice.

My beloved spoke, and said unto me: Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.
For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone;
The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;
The fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines in blossom give forth their fragrance.
Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the covert of the cliff, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.

My beloved is mine, and I am his, that feedeth among the lilies.

Until the day breathe, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a gazelle or a young hart upon the mountains of spices.

Who is this that cometh up out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?

Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thine eyes are as doves behind thy veil; thy hair is as a herd of gazelles, that race down from the hill country.

Thy teeth are like a flock of ewes all shaped alike, which are come up from the washing; whereof all are paired, and none faileth among them.
Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy mouth is comely; thy temples are like a pomegranate split open behind thy veil.

Thy two breasts are like two fawns that are twins of a gazelle, which feed among the lilies.
Until the day breathe, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense.

Thou art all fair, my love; and there is no spot in thee.
How fair is thy love!
How much better is thy love than wine!
And the scent of thine ointments than all manner of spices!

Thy lips, O my bride, drop honey; honey and milk are under thy tongue.

Thy shoots are a park of pomegranates, with precious fruits; henna with spikenard plants,

Spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes with all the chief spices.

Thou art a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters.

Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out.
Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his precious fruits.

I am come into my garden, my bride; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk.

I sleep, but my heart waketh; Hark! my beloved knocketh: Open to me, my love, my dove, my undefiled; for my head is filled with dew, my locks with the drops of the night.

I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on?
I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?

My beloved put in his hand by the latch of the door, and my heart was moved for him.

I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with flowing myrrh, upon the frame.

I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had turned away, and was gone.

My soul failed me when he spoke.

I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer.

My beloved is lovely and ruddy, pre-eminent above ten thousand.
His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are curled, and black as a raven.
His eyes are like doves beside the water-brooks; washed with milk, and fitly set.
His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as banks of sweet herbs; his lips are as lilies, dropping with flowing myrrh.
His hands are as rods of gold set with beryl; his body is as polished ivory overlaid with sapphires.
His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold.
His mouth is most sweet; yea, he is altogether lovely.
This is my beloved, and this is my friend.

Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women?

Whither hath thy beloved turned him, that we may seek him with thee?
My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies.

I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine that feedeth among the lilies.

My dove, my undefiled, is but one; she is the only one of her mother; she is the choice one of her that bore her.

Who is she that looketh forth as the dawn, fair as the moon, clear as the sun?

I went down into the garden to look at the green plants of the valley, to see whether the vine budded, and the pomegranates were in flower.

How beautiful are thy steps in sandals, O prince's daughter!
The roundings of thy thighs are like the links of a chain, the work of the hands of a skilled workman.
Thy navel is like a round goblet, wherein no mingled wine is wanting; thy belly is like a heap of wheat set about with lilies.
Thy two breasts are like two fawns that are twins of a gazelle.

How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!

This thy stature is like to a palm-tree, and thy breasts to clusters of grapes.
I said: I will climb up into the palm-tree, I will take hold of the branches thereof; and let thy breasts be as clusters of the vine, and the scent of thy countenance like apples;
And the roof of thy mouth like the best wine, that glideth down smoothly for my beloved, moving gently the lips of those that are asleep.

I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me.
Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the fields; let us lodge in the villages.
Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see whether the vine hath budded, whether the vine-blossom be opened, and the pomegranates be in flower; there will I give thee my love.

The mandrakes give forth fragrance, and at our doors are all manner of precious fruits, new and old which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved.

Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.

Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a gazelle or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices.

Annotation:

Hill of Corrin - Situated at the eastern end of the Nagles mountain range, the hill rises from the surrounding plain to a height of 220 meters (724 feet) and forming the most prominent landmark in the locality.

At one time, the lower more fertile section of the hill carried a cover of broadleaves and Scots pine. The complete hillside has since been re-planted with a variety of coniferous species whose tones merge to provide a colourful mantle for what once was a bare hillside.

Also found there are bracken, woodrush, briar, alder, birch, beech, hazel and holly. Fauna include rabbits, hares, badgers, foxes and squirrels while a variety of birds make their home in the woods.

The 'cairn' of stones at the summit, now much reduced in size, is still very evident and is thought to be an old burial site. During excavations carried out in the 1830's the first graves were uncovered. Two small vessels containing ashes were found, initially thought to be urns, which were later found to be food vessels carrying food for the departed spirits, and dating from some time in the Bronze Age, namely 10,000 to 1,500 years B.C. Encircling the summit are the remains of a ring fort that dates to the early Iron Age, namely 500 to 700 BC.

A 30-foot high stone cross was erected on the hill in 1933 by a Fermoy man named Magnier, to commemorate the Holy Year of 1933. There is also a Stations of the Cross on its southern approach.

It is interesting that the Hill of Corrin while being typical of the old red sandstone mountains of Munster contrasts sharply with the great carboniferous limestone areas of the valley below.

His Holiness Pope John Paul II at one time is said to have expressed a long held wish to visit this hill of all the hills in the land of Éire.

Augmentations, dated October 2007:

His Holiness Pope John Paul II passed away 2nd April 2005.

N8 highway refers to the road layout at the foot of the Hill of Corrin in June 2004.
The M8/N8 Rathcormac-Fermoy Bypass that opened on the 2nd October 2006 has greatly changed this layout.

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Chapter **15** *A fresh yew sapling*

Sights and sounds of foam white waves crashing on to the shore. Rain clouds in the far distance and in the ultra near high white wispies.

Such was the lovely setting four afternoons ago, sitting in the mouth of a cave on the lovely Calliso Bay east of the town of Youghal.

With the particular rectangular shape of the rocks towering up on either side of me, it felt as if I were in the Keck Observatory on top of Hawaii's Mauna Kea, gazing out at a section of the Universe.

Many heavy thoughts at the time had been making their way throughout my mind.
Thoughts on the callosity of hearts and the petrification of the moral sense in the days that now be.

With such considerations, and many more besides was I with gazing eastwards over the jade sea, when I noticed some shinny entities coming in low my way, just above the surface of the water.

At first, I took them to be a flock of small birds with their wings reflecting in the sunshine.
But these shinny things whatever they were, seemed to be flying or floating in a particular formation and style, not typical of the flight of any birds known to me.
They were in an upright wheel formation.

As they were coming in closer and closer, I could clearly see that the central shinny entity was larger than all the others.

With they coming in over the shoreline, I could count that there was one large orb-like object surrounded by eighteen other smaller objects.
The latter appeared to be in a retrograde motion.

With coming up before the mouth of the cave they halted their advance, and were there hovering and rotating in midair like a wheel.
It looked extremely beautiful.

The larger orb measured about eighteen centimeters (seven inches) in diameter.
It appeared to be a composite colour of a light blue, a blue-grey, and a blue-lilac with at times seemingly presenting a tint of very light green.
Oh, it was so beautiful.

The remaining eighteen orbs were of various sizes and were of similar colours to the large orb.

While the large orb appeared to be solid, many of the eighteen were transparent for I could clearly see the waves through them.

All of them taken together reminded me for all the world of those unexplainable anomaly orbs that sometimes appear in your developed photographs, especially in those photographs taken at sacred sites.

Many experts have tried to dismiss such anomalies as being due to the quality of the camera or of the film itself; the lightening, dust particles, raindrops or even condensation in the camera.
Yet, how is that even when all of those explanations have been well spoken for do the orbs still manage to appear?

I was with wondering where those mysteriously beautiful orbs had come from, when I found myself slowing rising off the sandy floor of the cave.
I was levitating in midair there in the mouth of the cave.

In a moment I could feel myself being gently drawn into; yes being drawn into the center orb, that being the largest of the orbs.

It sounds quite unbelievable, but wasn't I completely drawn into the orb, although it was as I've already mentioned above to be no more than eighteen centimeters in diameter.

I was now in the orb, and a most beautiful place it was too.
It was like no world that I have ever visited.

And I had this feeling that should someone happen to be standing without trying to look into the orb they would not be able to see me; they would not be able to see in.

The lovely lilac-blue orb began to move away from the mouth of the cave and out over the sea.
All the while its eighteen smaller satellites were in retrograde motion rotating about it.
Being viewed from within it was truly a fantastic sight.

There I was in this beautiful eighteen-centimetre diameter lilac-blue orb moving at a fair speed just above the waters.
If I told anyone else save yourself, definitely they would not believe me.

I had no idea why the orbs had come for me, and had taken me on board.
Nor did I have any idea where we were now headed.

After awhile, I could notice that we were following westwards along the coastline, with passing by such bays and harbours as those of Youghal Bay, Ballycotton, Cork, Kinsale, Courtmacsherry, Clonakilty, Rosscarbery, Glandore, Castlehaven, Baltimore, Roaring Water, Dunmanus, and Bantry Bay, in the county Cork, and with following into Kenmare Bay; all the way o'er the beautiful Reenagross Peninsula, and by way of the lovely town of Neidin, in the county Kerry.

From here we headed northwards over the land.

Off to our west rose majestic Carrán Tuathail, the highest mountain on the isle of Éire.

The scenery along the way was truly beautiful.
And soon we were crossing over into Killarney National Park.

If the scenery up to now had been truly beautiful, then from here onwards it was absolutely spectacular.

We were floating o'er the shimmering waters of the Upper Lake of the Killarney Lakes; o'er the Meetings of the Waters where nearby the Old Weir Bridge saw I five red deer grazing.
Out o'er the deep waters of the Middle Lake we went, and across to Colleen Bawn Rock.

And in a moment we were coming in o'er the great southern lawn before famous Muckross House.
The sun was gloriously shinning.

Many were the visitors from far and near did I see happily strolling about on the lawn and pathways.
No one at all from among them was able to see the beautiful floating orbs.

Then in a moment we were floating about the magnificent Scots Pine tree that stands there to the southeast of the House.
In all my travels never have I seen such a magnificent and wondrous Scots Pine.
The crevices in its bark were surely ten to thirteen centimeters (four to five inches) in depth.

It was while there floating about the tree in the beautiful lilac-blue orb that I first began to hear the mysterious voice softly calling out to me with,

"Oh Heart of Bounty come rescue me."

I looked about me in the high tree, but there was no one there.
I looked down at the visitors going up the steps to the House, but not one from among them was looking our way or was with calling out to us.

With floating along by the side of the House we were soon heading on out over the main driveway when I again heard the voice calling out to me with,

"Oh Heart of Bounty come rescue me."

It seemed to be that bit stronger as if we were getting that bit closer to its source.

With the view of Muckross House no longer behind us, we were now floating along o'er a woodland pathway down by the lapping waters of the Lower Lake.

We paused awhile by a young Scots Pine growing on a ledge overlooking the waters, where the rock formations reminded me of lasagne folds.

I gazed out at an islet that was not very far from the shore.
Something akin to a plate or a platter at the base of a rock was sparkling wondrously like some rare gem.

Over to the right of the islet were two rocks jutting out of the waters that seemed to me in the bright sunshine to have the appearance of two white horses making their way slowly towards the shore with dragging the islet behind them.

Leaving the lakeside, we moved in along through the woodland, and came out above a lovely small road.
Along it were people happily strolling in the direction of Muckross House.

And along that same lovely road came some jaunting cars with the wind playing with the horse's manes and the passengers' heads of hair.
The sound of the horses trotting along was very musical.

I delighted in watching through the sun-drenched trees the motions and forms of the horses and the sparkling patterns of the jaunting car wheels.

The jaunting cars with their happy crews were all heading along the road to the right for Muckross House while we floated on to the left.

As we were floating along the intensity of the mysterious voice calling,

"Oh Heart of Bounty come rescue me."

was clearly getting stronger.

With rounding about this bend in the road, I beheld to my left the shore of the Lower Lake, and off to my right in the

foreground of a field a crowded cemetery with a magnificent abbey ruin in the background.

The ruin was of a partly Norman and Gothic design, and with the bell tower appearing to be as wide as the church itself. That was something special that I hadn't seen anywhere else.

Two friendly border collies that were running on ahead of their owners started playfully barking up at the orbs.
The owners however could not see the orbs.

It was very nice that the lovely collies could see the orbs, although I knew from their lovely hazel eyes that they were not able to see me there within the lilac-blue orb.

I had seen this abbey somewhere before, but suddenly I couldn't remember where or when.
Yet, didn't I know it to have a beautiful name; and the name of 'Oir Bhealach' was clearly in my mind.
How I knew it to have this name, knew I not.

I was with such thoughts when I found myself standing on the road.
I was outside the beautiful lilac-blue orb, and was in my normal stature standing there on the road.

The collies that had already gone along the road must have somehow picked up my scent for they now came prancing back along the road and played all about me.
They were so wonderfully friendly.

I rubbed and patted them on their heads and sent them off to their owners, who waved to me in the distance.

Looking about I noticed that the lilac-blue orb and its companions were hovering about high up in the nearby trees.

I began to walk along the road a little ways before taking a fern and ivy-adorned pathway into the left for the abbey ruin.

With entering through a small side archway and coming around about to the entrance of the abbey proper, I knew where I was.
Yes, I was standing before the abbey of my dreams of some nights ago.

In the dream, it was called 'Oir Bhealach' the 'Eastern Way' but universally known by the name of Muckross Abbey and by some as the Observantine Franciscan Friary of Irrelagh.

I hadn't heard the mysterious voice since the road, and began to wonder had I come to the right place.

With such a thought, I was about to enter the abbey when I again began to hear the voice calling,

"Oh Heart of Bounty come rescue me."

I knew I was in the right place for I could feel that it was coming from within the abbey itself.

I wondered might it be coming from one of the many tombs found there within the nave and the chancel.

With putting my ear to one tomb, then to another, to another, to another, and yet to another the calling didn't seem to be coming from within any one of them.

Then I went and listened to the sidewalls beneath the window openings, but the calling was not coming from them either.

I was now very much at a loss, for although I could hear the voice calling to me, I couldn't locate its source.

Then I lay down on the floor beneath the bell tower and listened very attentively.

Of all the places I had listened to the calling, here seemed to be more even in that it was neither fainter nor stronger.

Somehow, I felt that the source of the calling was there in the floor, yet, I felt it wasn't.

I was about to go outside to listen to the bell tower wall when something inclined me to first go through this arched doorway.
There facing me was this beautiful arched stoned corridor.

The calling had momentarily stopped, and I found myself in a silence of expectancy.

With stepping into the corridor I knew where I was.
I was in a corridor of the cloister garth.

I was slowly walking along and being quite awed by the architecture of the ceiling, when simultaneously I thought I saw something unusual out of the corner of my left eye in the center of the garth, and heard these now familiar words calling to me,

"Oh Heart of Bounty come rescue me."

Honestly, for a moment I felt the hairs on the back of my neck stand on end, and a chill run down my spine.
It was not out of any fear but rather it was due to the synchronicity of place, sight and sound.

I slowly turned towards the garth with not knowing what to expect.

Beheld I therein a tree; yes, beheld I in the center of the garth a yew tree, like unto an animal trapped in a cage of ringed steel, did it appear to me to be.

A most troublesome looking yew tree stood there in the center of a spiked cage in the center of the walled roofless box of stone.

Its twisty mossy girth would have been about two to three meters (seven to nine feet) and barely did its uppermost branches reach above those surrounding walls.
There was evidence that down through the years some of its branches had been sawn off, perhaps to prevent it from knocking any of the surrounding walls.

How deep or how extensive were its roots I could not tell, save that to assume that they were already very deep, and had most likely travelled way beneath the whole abbey, and out into the surrounding cemetery.

I was so overwhelmed by an unknown sadness at seeing this most sacred of trees being confined so, that I was unable to move another step.

Then there came forth from the saddest yew tree in the world known to me, the words,

"Oh Heart of Bounty return me to my native woodland; to my mother's side, for I have been so very very lonely within these walls."

"Where is your mother?"

"My mother she lives away to the east on a northern bank of the Great River of the South."

"How did it come about that you found yourself here in this cloister garth, so very far away from home?"

"When I was yet but a fragile sapling within my mother's shadow on the shortest day of a year, there came into the sacred woodland good-intentioned holy men who removed me from a tip of one of my mother's long roots.
Very carefully they carried me through the wood and laid me safely in a waiting boat on the river.
For two and four days we sailed westward the river, and then by over land they did very carefully carry me until they came here before their newly established monastic retreat.

With hymns and prayers in the company of the whole abbey community did the Abbot plant me in the center of the cloister garth.

Everyone in each of the archways about here smiled and commented one to another on how good I looked here within.

Here I have been trying to exist these passed five hundred and fifty-six years.

There hasn't been a dawn or a twilight when I haven't thought of my mother, and how so very lonely she must be also, ever since that day when I was taken out of her reach.

Sometimes in the deep night, I imagine I can hear her calling me with …"

"Suasiaoibhinn cá bhfuil tú cá bhfuil tú cá bhfuil tú?"
Suasiaoibhinn where are you where are you where are you?

With my eyes full of tears I asked,

"How old was your mother when you were taken from her?"

"She was in her six thousand three hundred and twenty-seventh year.

My mother is of the ancient Sept of Rivularis Rediviva. I being the ninth lifetime.

Oh Heart of Bounty return me please to my native woodland; to my mother's side, for I have been so very very lonely within these walls.

How I long to reach down in the company of my mother's roots to sap of the life giving waters of the Great River.

All the years long in this place they have given me to grow on rocks and bones and limestone pavements.
See me, I'm more rock than bark, and more bone than branch.

Whenever I have tried to reach outward and skyward, invariably someone has always come and permanently terminated such yearnings.
Forever here being made to nicely fit this enclosure.

Everybody sees me standing here in my confinement, but nobody knows me."

I now entered the garth, and stood at the meter and a half (five feet) high spiked cage, and thus spoke unto the lonely yew tree,

"How, how is it physically possible for me to rescue you, for see I'm but a human of no special strength?"

"Place your hands within the opening here in my trunk."

I tired to reach in, but the distance was too far for me.
I would have to somehow get inside the cage.
The spikes looked very sharp and even menacing.

Very very slowly and with great alertness did I ease myself up and in over them.
One slip and I would have done some serious injury to myself.

Once within, I placed my two hands within the opening.

Hardly had I done so when I felt something soft and moist become present in my cupped hands.

Gradually, and with great care did I withdraw them, and was amazed to see there delicately standing every so prettily in my cupped hands, yes, a fresh yew sapling of some twenty-two centimeters (nine inches) in height in a finely rooted ball of moist soil.

"Crann óg na Foighde céad míle fáilte romhat!"
Welcome young Tree of Patience!

"A Chroí na Féile go raibh míle maith agat!"
Oh Heart of Bounty thank you.

I was about to consider how now was I going to get back out over the spikes, for I was concerned with letting the sapling down that I might wound it, when about me came the lilac-blue orb and its companions.

In a moment I was sitting in the orb with holding the yew sapling before me, and we were moving up out of the garth above the yew relique and away eastwards over the land were we met up with the fountainhead of the Great River of the South.

We moved along at first southwards and then eastwards o'er its trout and then salmon teeming waters; along its luxuriant banks we went by scenery most beautiful; along by scenery most beautiful adorned about many the bend by spacious woodlands.

In no time we were with rounding a bend on the river when a woodland on the left bank we did enter.

With moving along beneath the sun-drenched tree canopy the words,

"Whose woods these are I think I know."

quite leisurely presented themselves to my mind.

In a moment I found myself standing on the floor of the wood, and holding in my cupped hands the yew sapling from Oir Bhealach.

I looked out before me some distance and beheld there a most wondrous sight.

There in the bright wood was standing this most magnificent yew tree, with a girth surely of at least five to seven meters (sixteen to twenty-three feet).
It looked so graceful and dignified.

Somehow I knew from a warmth in the soles of my feet that here was the place for the sapling.

Slowly bringing myself down on to my knees, I ever so carefully stood the sapling on the ground to my left, and supported it with some of last year's leaves while I dug with my bare hands a place for it in the ground.

The soil felt rich and warm.

Within a few minutes, my fingers touched something in the soil.
It was the fine tip of a large root.

Slowly and very carefully I placed the sapling on the tip of the root.

In that very moment I heard these words,

"Suasiaoibhinn cá raibh tú cá raibh tú cá raibh tú?"
Suasiaoibhinn where have you been where have you been where have you been?

"O mo Mhamaí mo Mhamaí mo Mhamaí O!"
Oh my Mammy my Mammy my Mammy oh!

Gently I shook the soil in about the sapling's delicate roots while all the while softly packing it about with the backs of my fingers.

Then I went down to the bank of the river, and in my cupped hands brought back some water and gently poured it about the sapling.
This journey I repeated twice over.

Then I collected some briars and brambles and placed them here and there at a short distance about the sapling, so as to protect it from any small animals that might be given to playing about it, or from any person who with finding themselves momentarily over burdened with too many outworldly thoughts, may not be given to noticing before their step such a delicate lifeform as a yew sapling.

While I was with such thoughts, I heard what sounded like the sound of someone sobbing; the sound of someone sobbing most pitifully.

With standing and listening in stillness, I made out that it must be coming from the opposite side of the mother yew tree.

As quietly as possible, I went to see if I could be of some help.

With rounding about the great tree, I beheld a man sitting on the ground with his back against the tree.

A little distance away from him was a cell (mobile) phone and its earpiece, and they appeared to have been tossed there out of disinterest.

The man was sobbing away most pitifully to himself; most lamentably was he sobbing so that it seemed he wasn't even aware of my presence.
Rather than say anything, I thought it best just to sit down.

After awhile, I sensed that he was becoming aware of my presence. And when he was able to get enough control over his sobbing, grieving words came forth from him adrift.

"Darryl was one of the nicest people you could ever have working for you.
He was a person full of life.
A true lover of nature so he was who even at one time had worked for the British Natural History Museum.
He was someone who loved his job surely and delighted in being professional.
Murdered in cold blood in the middle of the night he was and all for the sake of a laptop."

Signing deeply he continued.

"They are young dancers on the road.
I love those kids so I do.
Their well-being is so very very important to me.
All of them were traumatised, devastated, shocked and saddened.
Oh, how awful, how very awful it must have been for poor Damien…"

With breaking into a flood of cascading tears it was some time again before he was able to speak.

"How can I go on?
My heart, my heart is failing within me.
I had been of late so full of joy and excited about my forthcoming new show.
But now, alas, this sorrow overwhelms me."

There was a long silence, and then as if from some hidden faithful reserve deep within him, he brought forth a light unto his words.

"Ronan has composed the music for it.
We are a dynamic team together so we are.
This show will be a work of art; a bravura performance par excellence."

With rising to my feet I went over and picked up his cell phone and its earpiece and handed them to him.

A hope-filling smile began to appear in his face, and in his eyes a dawn of joyfulness.

And he said,

"Thank you kind Listener of the Woodland.
Yes, yes, yes, however the oft cruel ways of the world be, we must with the following of our dreams forever be."

And in that moment out of his presence was I given to be, away away up and beyond the mighty yew tree.

It was by full moonlight when the beautiful lilac-blue orb and its eighteen lovely satellites returned me to the cave entrance on lovely Calliso Bay.

Away away they floated as they had come; out over the moonlit waves and away high into the cosy sheen they did go.

And with a great thankfulness of heart I was to them.

For a long time I sat there, watching the soft yellow hued moonlight playing on the waters before strolling down the beach, to board my carriage for home.

Annotations:

Neidin - from Gaeilge meaning, 'little nest/cradle' - the beautiful town of Kenmare located on the Ring of Kerry.

Whose woods these are I think I know... from the poem *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* by Robert Frost.

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~ ~ ~ ~ ≈ *sailing on* ♪

Chapter **16** *A self-renunciation*

Three afternoons ago, I was on top of the Hill of Elksnmist feeling very blessed and thankful with my life.

I often go up there to stroll about, reflect, and even to write.
It is a lovely place truly.
And the weather that day was most beautiful.

Usually, I am there all on my ownsome as hardly any one from the village goes up there.
Perhaps they consider it a little too far of a walk.

At the time, I had taken to sitting on a familiar log there on top of the hill, and was facing southeastwards.
It felt so very good to be there, with the lyrics and melodies of so many different songs dancing their way delightfully throughout my mind.

Now, it was when the moving lyrics and lovely melody of a particular song, sung by an artist well familiar to me through voice and appearance, was dancing its delightful way throughout my mind, that I happen to glance northwards, and there beheld to my great surprise and wonderment, a woman

all fully clothed in edenwear strolling her way my way up the hillside path.

Rather than rising to my feet which normally I would do in such circumstances out of courtesy for a woman, I remained seated where I was as I did not want her to feel any discomfort at finding a man present on her way.

When she would be with passing on by me, I would with respect greet her, and let her be on her way down the southern side of the hill.

As she neared, I could see that she was extraordinarily beautiful, yet who she was I knew not nor had I ever seen her before in book, screen or magazine.
If I had had, I most definitely would have remembered, for astonishingly beautiful she was *da capo a' piè*.

I was about to greet her with,

"Lovely day, isn't it?"

when she in a mellifluous voice initiated with,

"Guardian of this sacred hilltop, do you mind if I recline myself awhile there beside you on the soft cushy grass, for my feet are somewhat tired with strolling?"

I rose to my feet with saying to her,

"You're more than welcome to recline there on the soft cushy grass beside me, for the hill welcomes everyone."

Most charmingly did she recline herself on the soft cushy grass there beside the log.

With again sitting down on the log, I was about to return to my original thoughts, when the reclining lady put this question to me.

"Before my arrival, if you don't mind me asking, what were you musing on?"

"You're most welcome to ask.
I was musing on the moving lyrics and lovely melody of a beautiful song, titled, *I won't leave You Lonely*."

And the extraordinarily beautiful Lady Recline did effortlessly begin to sing the song to me.

Together - midnight in summer
The air's so much warmer
Falling in love under starlight
Holding on so tight-together

I won't leave you lonely tonight
I want you to hold me all night
It's gonna be alright
I won't leave you lonely tonight

Imagine - the air filled with jasmine
The breeze blows with passion
You and me dance with desire
The moon is on fire - imagine

I won't leave you lonely tonight
I want you to hold me all night
It's gonna be alright
I won't leave you lonely tonight

Je t'aime beaucoup mon amour
You are the one I adore

I won't leave you lonely tonight
I want you to hold me all night
It's gonna be alright
No you won't be lonely tonight

Na-na-na...
Te amo mucho mi amor
You are the one I adore
Te amo

So marvellously did she sing it, that my head was almost in a swoon.

Then after a few moments of dulcet silence, she put this question to me.

"How would you like to be a world renowned singer?
I could easily make that happened for you, if, you wouldn't mind doing just one small little thing for me in return."

"And may I enquire as to what might that 'just one small little thing for me in return' be?"

"Ah, I'll be with telling you presently, but first I would like to ask you how would you like to be a guest on *The Ryan Show* and *The Today Show* on Radio Telefis Éireann?
I could easily make that happened for you, if, you wouldn't mind doing just one small little thing for me in return."

"And may I enquire as to what might that 'just one small little thing for me in return' be?"

"Ah, I'll be with telling you presently, but first I would like to ask you how would you like to appear on the following breakfast television shows:

TV3 *Ireland AM* with Claire Byrne and Mark Cagney
GMTV *Today* with Emonn Holmes and Fiona Philips

BBC *Breakfast* with Sir David Frost
FR2 *Telematin* with William Leymergie
DasErsteDE ARD *Morgenmagazin* with J. Schulte-Loh
NBC *Today* with Katie Couric and Matt Lauer?

I could easily make that happened for you, if, you wouldn't mind doing just one small little thing for me in return."

"And may I enquire as to what might that 'just one small little thing for me in return' be?"

"Ah, I'll be with telling you presently, but first I would like to ask you how would you like to own a bottle of

Château Lafite Rothschild Pauillac 1996
Château Margaux 1995
Château Haut Brion Pessac-Léognan 1982
Château Mouton Rothschild Pauillac 1986
Château La Mondotte Saint-Emilion 1996
Château Valandraud Saint-Emilion 1995
Château Latour Pauillac 1990
Château Le Pin Pomerol 1999
Petrus Pomerol 1998
Dom. Romanée Conti 1997
Dom. Romanée Conti Montrachet 1978?

I could easily make that happened for you, if, you wouldn't mind doing just one small little thing for me in return."

"And may I enquire as to what might that 'just one small little thing for me in return' be?"

"Ah, I'll be with telling you presently, but first I would like to ask you how would you like to own every work ever painted by the Dutch artist Vincent Willem van Gogh, and in addition every poem ever written by the Irish poet Francis Edward Ledwidge and in his own hand too, including those that were lost in the soaking wet trenches of Belgium and France?

I could easily make that happened for you, if, you wouldn't mind doing just one small little thing for me in return."

"And may I enquire as to what might that 'just one small little thing for me in return' be?"

"Ah, I'll be with telling you presently, but first I would like to ask you how would you like to be adored and attended upon your every need wherever you go by the most beautiful and sensual women the world over?

I could easily make that happened for you, if, you wouldn't mind doing just one small little thing for me in return."

"And may I enquire as to what might that 'just one small little thing for me in return' be?"

"Ah, I'll be with telling you presently, but first I would like to ask you how would you like to own a greater house and more land here on the isle of Éire, and at the same time have homes in such fabulous places as Barbados, New York, Los Angeles, Hawaii, Switzerland, Monte Carlo, and on the beautiful isle of Capri?

I could easily make that happened for you, if, you wouldn't mind doing just one small little thing for me in return."

"And may I enquire as to what might that 'just one small little thing for me in return' be?"

"Ah, I'll be with telling you presently, but first I would like to ask you how would you like to own one or all of these?

A Lamborghini Gallardo or a Ferrari Challenge Stradale
A Bentley Continental GT or a Mercedes-Benz CL65 AMG
A Maserati Quattroporte or a Jaguar XJR
A Cadillac SRX or a Lexus GX 470

A Rolls-Royce Phantom V/12/4 with a top speed of 149 mph / 240 km/h?

I could easily make that happened for you, if, you wouldn't mind doing just one small little thing for me in return."

"And may I enquire as to what might that 'just one small little thing for me in return' be?"

"Ah, I'll be with telling you presently, but first I would like to ask you how would you like to own the most powerful speedboat, the largest yacht, the most beautiful five-masted full-rigged sailing ship, the latest Sikorsky S-76 helicopter or the most advanced personal aircraft in the world?

I could easily make that happened for you, if, you wouldn't mind doing just one small little thing for me in return."

"And may I enquire as to what might that 'just one small little thing for me in return' be?"

"Ah, I'll be with telling you presently, but first I would like to ask you how would you like to be able to use at your leisure all of the most powerful telescopes on the planet from your own home through the process of interferometry?

I could easily make that happened for you, if, you wouldn't mind doing just one small little thing for me in return."

"And may I enquire as to what might that 'just one small little thing for me in return' be?"

"Ah, I'll be with telling you presently, but first I would like to ask you how would you like to have an all inclusive fully paid yearly ticket for life on all present and future means of space travel?

I could easily make that happened for you, if, you wouldn't mind doing just one small little thing for me in return."

"And may I enquire as to what might that 'just one small little thing for me in return' be?"

"Ah, I'll be with telling you presently, but first I would like to ask you how would like to have the opportunity to stay for as long as you like and whenever you like on the International Space Station or on a future station on Earth's moon or on any of the other planets in the Solar System or even on their moons too?

I could easily make that happened for you, if, you wouldn't mind doing just one small little thing for me in return."

"And may I enquire as to what might that 'just one small little thing for me in return' be?"

"Ah, I'll be with telling you presently, but first I would like to ask you how would you like to be associated with the Vault of Twelve Seven?

I could easily make that happened for you, if, you wouldn't mind doing just one small little thing for me in return."

"And may I enquire as to what might that 'just one small little thing for me in return' be?"

"Ah, I'll be with telling you presently, but first I would like to ask you how would you like to have all your writings past, present, and future published by one of the most famous publishing houses in the world?

I could easily make that happened for you, if, you wouldn't mind doing just one small little thing for me in return."

"And may I enquire as to what might that ‘just one small little thing for me in return’ be?"

"All of these and much more besides, I can easily do for you Guardian of this sacred hilltop, if, you will do just one small little thing for me for the duration of one full hour."

"And what might that ‘one small thing’ be?"

"Very simply really, that for the first fifteen minutes of the next hour you would allow yourself to have absolutely no love whatsoever to be in your heart for your son Richard, and following on that in the next fifteen minutes that you would allow yourself to have absolutely no love whatsoever to be in your heart for your daughter Iris, and following on that in the remaining thirty minutes that you would allow yourself to have absolutely no love whatsoever to be in your heart for your wife Sung-ja Lee."

With slowly rising to my feet, I courteously replied,

"Have a nice rest Lady Recline."

and began to slowly walk away when she said,

"How about instead of one hour, only for the duration of one full minute?"

"Lady Recline, have a nice rest here is this lovely place."

And I was with continuing on my way, when she seducingly said to me,

"Seeing that the finely attired sun there is already well journeyed high, how would you like here to have me, for in this lovely place nobody surely would see, save the golden blind eye of the high blue sky?"

"You're an extraordinarily beautiful and wondrously sensual woman no doubt, but my Sung-ja Lee be for me."

"With all due respect to your exceptionally beautiful and wondrously sensual Sung-ja Lee, you wouldn't know what you're missing until you've had me."

"You're an extraordinarily beautiful and wondrously sensual woman no doubt about that surely, but with all due respect my Sung-ja Lee means more to me."

"Truly truly she is fortunate and blessed among women to have a man such as thee."

"Rather truly truly blessed and fortunate be me among men to have a woman such as she."

And I did give that sensually reclining woman a gentle wave with a soft smile, and strolled upon my way off down the southern hillside pathway.

And she too had given me a gentle wave with a soft smile, and having most charmingly risen to her feet, she did stroll upon her way off down the northern hillside pathway.

Upon my strolling away home I pondered in my heart the words and the reality that I had encountered there on the hilltop.

And I asked myself, what would it have profited me, if I had gained the whole world, and be without even for a moment this purely cultured love in my heart for my Richard, my Iris, and my Sung-ja Lee?
It wouldn't have profited me at all, at all, and at all.

And I was with great thankfulness of heart.

With sitting in reflection before the white grotto gate at the foot of Elksnmist, this experience of victory for yet another day through self-renunciation was felt to be truly sweet.

Verily, temptation is by way far the most difficult of life's subjects to comprehend, yet once appreciated even at the fundamental level, it proves itself time and time again to be most rewarding.

And behold, from the golden sighted eye of the high blue sky, there came there above and about me a flock of playful swallows.

And in their jocund company I did stroll on down to my lovely home in the pretty village below, and was with fully knowing my life to be truly blessed.

Annotations:

da capo a' piè - from Italian meaning, 'from head to foot'

I Won't Leave You Lonely - from Shania Twain's album *Come On Over* released in 1997 by Polygram.
In 2000, *Come On Over* was certified by the Recording Industry Association of America as the best-selling solo album by a female artist in history.

1. Man! I Feel Like A Woman!
2. I'm Holdin' On To Love (To Save My Life)
3. Love Gets Me Every Time
4. Don't Be Stupid (You Know I Love You)
5. From This Moment On
6. Come On Over
7. When
8. Whatever You Do! Dont!
9. If You Wanna Touch Her, Ask!
10. You're Still The One
11. Honey, I'm Home
12. That Don't Impress Me Much
13. Black Eyes, Blue Tears

14. I Won't Leave You Lonely
15. Rock This Country!
16. You've Got A Way

Shania Twain (née Eileen Regina Edwards) was born on the 28th of August 1965, in Windsor, Ontario to parents Sharon and Clarence Edwards both of whom have Irish ancestry.
The name "Shania", means "I'm on my way" in the Native American language of the Ojibway - the Native American tribe of her stepfather Jerry Twain.
Shania is married to the extremely gifted song writer/music producer Robert John "Mutt" Lange. They and their son Eja live in La Tour-de-Peilz on the shores of Lake Geneva in Switzerland.

Shania:

"I don't regret any of my struggles in life.
I've had to learn how to survive.
I've had to dig down into my own creativity and say,
Ok, you can be better."

Composed the following poem titled '*Queen Helen*' on Sunday morning the 11th July 2004 while out strolling by the Hill of Elksnmist.

The poem is dedicated to the poet/singer/artist Shania Twain.

Queen Helen

Honeybee buzzing about my head,
Raindrops on clover petals;
Yellow flower growing delicately inside the gate.
Happy Lady be strolling by the Genève lake.

Dripping ferns 'neath cupped honeysuckles,
White and pink blossoms tarry their way;
Tarry their way o'er the wild wild roses from Mandalay.
Lavender Lady be greeting the bright new day.

Mois de Juillet on the beautiful isle of Éire,
Sauntering hazel mare by a glistening rivulet;
White butterfly and golden collie playing about at hoof.
Queen Helen be remembering her sacred root.

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Chapter **17** *A fresh pot of tea*

Yesterday after lunch, I strolled down in misty rainbow showers to the Brideview Tavern.

Sitting in the restaurant I was with having a cup of tea and looking out the southerly facing window.

There were five or seven other guests in the restaurant at the time, who after awhile with finishing their meals contently went upon their way.
And I was left alone there in that beautiful place with my rambling thoughts.

The view outside the window was of the eleven-arched stone bridge over the Bride River that at that spot flows from west to east.
I let my attention focus on the big old willow tree below me that grows there some three to five meters (ten to fifteen feet) out over the water and then vertically for some nine (thirty feet) or more.

With the last few weeks, whenever I passed over the bridge, I took a particular notice of that tree for it hasn't been growing at all this year.

I thought that very unusual.

Other years it had been growing so beautifully for the summer and giving such a lovely colour in the winter.
Why wasn't it growing this year?
Something must be wrong.

I noticed that some seedlings were growing in the pockets between its branches.
Perhaps some of them had been carried or blown there from other trees.
Were some its own seedlings?

Why had it decided not to grow this year?
Why had it stopped last summer?

There was no visible reason why it should not be growing.
It was almost as if it had given up on growing.

What would have caused such a great tree to give up?
An answer didn't seem to present itself to me at the time.

Here was a tree; a mighty tree planted by the living waters, yet seemingly it had given up on living.

I was with such thoughts when I found my mind drifting away in the mistiness of the afternoon, to my concerns,

especially of late, on the situation of the Christiantree in the world.

How very shocking, sad, and pitiful be its present situation.
It appears to have like the great tree by the living waters to have given up on living.

Sure there are some seedlings growing in its branch pockets, but for the most part they are not seeds of its own.

Why has this great and wondrously generous tree seemingly given up on living?
Perhaps it is because it has stopped sipping of the living waters of humanity.
Its channels are drying up as there is no water running through them.

Why, I asked myself has this world of my day become so unimaginably corrupt?

Everywhere I look in society at home and abroad, see I so many awful things happening.
I feel so very very sad that so many people in the world have absolutely no problem with being morally ruinous.

Am I old fashioned; am I out of date?

Why do I still feel the need to honour virtue, and maintain the moral standards of old?

Is it possible that once wholesome giving waters of life are now poisoning?

Am I a tree dying by the waters edge?

Corruption at every level of the social fabric do I see.
It feels to me as if it is about to completely spin right out of control.

Two hugely important reports on intelligence, that will by the rippling effect, be touching on every one on the planet, were published these days on both sides of the Atlantic.
Yet no one, no body or no group is taking responsibility for anything.

Lives upon lives upon lives have been lost, and as many again have been cast into dungeons in hidden valleys.
Yet no one, no body or no group at all at all is standing up to share the blame and the shame.

This is the world we now find ourselves living in, oh, Descendants of ours.
Know through this story that I tell, this to have been truly so in your ancestors' day.

The Internet, as it is being so called, is at this point in time for the most part a brothel-house, ever expanding itself twenty thousand square roods at a go into the last few remaining faithful rooms of the Great Libraries of Moral Integrity.

The Christiantree once a great tree is it seems no longer living.

What of the great Judahtree, and the great Islamtree? What of them?

What of the great Buddhatree, the great Hindutree, and the hundreds of other belieftrees the world over?
What of them?

What of the sanctity of relationships; the sanctity of marriage?
What sanctity?

Am I; am I becoming cynical?

The world I feel is morally falling apart; falling apart, falling asunder.

Soon something terrible may be going to happen, for don't I be feeling it in the noontime of even a bright sunny summer's day.

I am with feeling that it could be worse by nine to eleven times that of 19141839455O535975…

Am I; am I becoming an alarmist?

Who will commit such an awful thing?
Not those who I think will or neither those who I think would never.

Who then?
How can I know this; how can I be with knowing all?
Isn't it sufficient merely to know the know?

Am I falling apart?

Was I born too late in the old or too early in the new?

Am I a transition?

Was the world always like this with its headlong running towards its own well-deserved destruction?

What if this has been the absolutely worst it has ever been?
What for me would that mean?
It would mean that I'm standing on the edge of the end of the world of this modern era.

If the world is going down, so surely must I be going down with it, for there will be no place to run to and no place to feel safe.

Are these the last days of this beautiful world as we've known it?
Will all the genuine personalities of home and hearths the earth over; all the rivers, fields, hills, lands and seas be removed as if they had never been?

Will this living orb, the pride and joy of this wondrous Solar System be henceforth known by all beyond as 'The Ignominy' and most inhospitable of all its planets?

We humans have the power to demolish the planet, but we are far too cowardly to do it.
We prefer it seems to be living in deepening cesspools rather than blast it out of existence and to start all over again someplace else.

Yet, I know this decision fortunately has always been out of our hands, and well out of our reach.

The signs are already there, for who is there in the world today that has the moral integrity and commitment to bring the world into a form of presentation that is most admirable?

There is no one individual nor is there any one body or group at all at all, who at present has such moral integrity and commitment.
How sad the world of my day has thus become.

Many beyond my faithful family, who were once long-trusted by me to their very core, found have I they to be, as corrupt as corrupt can seem to be.

Am I painting a picture most gloomy or is it the picture that is painting me most gloomy to be?

Oh, Help of the Helpless, oh, Flight of the so Easily Frightened, please steady me.

On and on the waters below the lovely bridge doth flow and flow.

Tree on this near bank have you given up on living?
Should I too be of such a choice as thee?
Should I be with letting myself fall over into the flowing waters, and there within be with panic taking all hold of me?

In minutes I would be as a lifeless leaf floating and tumbling down adown along along with the flow; hitting off this bank and that.
All my present outward beauty within a few kilometers would be all removed.

Oh, all the pain, oh, all the pain, oh, all the pain and the sorrow for those of my love left behind.

Yet, I would be no more and no more would I be with having to be concerning myself with this world that has not been fulfilling my youthful dreams and noble expectations.

Beautiful Bride River be with flowing on without me, for however pending doom this world presents itself to me, I must be with staying with my love ones be.

Yes, I will stay here among the living, and be with trying continuously to make a qualitative difference to the well-being of the world.

Can one alone halt the advancement of the gigantic inevitable?
I don't know if one can or if one can't, but one thing is certain, that I being born at the end of something, be it at the beginning of something, I'm not giving up; giving up no way.

With such soliloquising thoughts I moved my pondering gaze from the flowing waters to the battlement of the bridge. There to my surprise was a man walking along the battlement towards the Tavern.

With nearing the end, sustain your belief with me if you will, didn't he take to walking right through the wall of windows into the restaurant, and came and sat himself down opposite me at my table, without as much as an - Excuse me may I sit down here?

Oh, my, let me tell you, I have seen some less than beautiful people in appearance in my life, thankfully very few in number, but this character whoever he may have been, was definitely the least of the least when it comes to presenting a beauteous countenance to the world.

Without as much as a good afternoon he addressed me with,

"Go out and fell yourself into the waters there for you're not needed in this world."

His voice sounded for all the world like that of the bark of a dog, yet he wasn't barking at me.

Calmly I replied with,

"Who are you to say?
Who are you who have gained such a knowledge, and have such a hold on my thoughts?"

"Your thoughts, are of no more worth than a fly's hind leg footprints on horse manure in the field over the ways."

"Leave me and get back to your kennel."

"I have frightened you well many the time, and will again."

"Look, you may take on the form of a barking seashore, glaring eyes in a dark cloud, a most unnatural neighing in a horsebox or even the form of an unbelievably large black dog roaming and prowling about as if for prey, as you have been accustomed on occasion to do, but you don't, no you don't frighten me."

"You look pretty frightened enough now to me as it is."

"You don't, no you don't frighten me."

"We'll see about that when you kneel some Sunday morning before the altar, and during the consecration of the mass; we will be with seeing then who will be frightened."

"Take your circus of fears and bury them in your own existence, whatever that might be."

"Venture not forth into a new day of the days, for I will be waiting in the shadows to remove thee out of my sight once and for all.
Be thusly with living fearing your own imminent demise."

"Your words are haughty and most laughable, for if I thought for once that I had to deal with you on my strength alone, I would have long been since overwhelmed by your antics."

"Who is this who stands on your behalf?"

"No one stands on my behalf, rather there is one who stands shoulder to shoulder with me."

"You speak of your precious wife, I suppose?"

"You would be incorrect in your suppositions for she too has one who stands shoulder to shoulder with her."

"In all my celebrated time, I've never been more satisfied with the world as it has become these days, and may I add if I may, in no small part thanks to me.
It is truly fantastic in that my every effort has been so willingly taken fully on board from singles to couples; from newly weds to those long married; from villages to whole towns, and from cities to mighty countries.

It is a most pleasing time for me, and again if I may be so bold as to say, in no small part thanks to me.

Stick around if you will, and watch the master bring his handiwork to full completion.

For when you will behold the clouds in the heavens blush crimson, then you will know that my work is nearing its full completion.

And you can have whosoever you want standing at or on either shoulder or even be carrying you on their own shoulder, I'm going to bring my work to completion, yes, one way or another.
Yes, one way or another I'm going to be able to bring my work to completion; my work will be brought to completion in your very person."

"Grandiose and bombastic indeed are your words.
Do you have anything better to be doing than bothering me?"

"This afternoon, there is nothing or no one as important to me as you, believe me."

"Ah, the misty rain has stopped and soon the sun will be reappearing."

"All the brightness of the sun will not deter me in my plans."

"Then why are you moving away?"

"I must be about the world."

"The world is here before you, why need you to be going anywhere else?
See here how beautifully sun shines on the rich ark of the sea."

"I must be about the world."

"The world is here before you, why need you to be running away like so?
See here how beautifully sun shines in the vivid soft jade greens."

"I must, I must, and I must be about the world."

And he became no more.

Surely eternities happen in moments.

"Excuse me, Richard would you like a fresh pot of tea?"

"That's very kind of you Carmel.
Thank you very much."

"You're most welcome Richard."

Oh, salmon and trout in the glistening waters do ye see me here up in this lovely balcony?
Do ye know how I long to be swimming in the depths of height and flying in the heights of depth?

Oh, my, oh, my, behold I see the renewal of life in the great tree!

"Why, oh, beautiful great tree have you again taken to living?"

And the voice of the great tree spoke unto my heart.

"When I heard you speaking so courageously right into the face of fear to you, found I anew my reason true to continue on living."

"Great Tree, your words are strength and they are life."

And I did with a great lightness of heart rise from my balcony seat and table by the living glistening waters, and with thanking kind Carmel of Murray did go outside into the lovely bright fresh afternoon.

The air was filled with that loveliness of a summer's day having had for a time given away to some soft misty rainbow showers.

Strolling o'er the bridge I noticed to my left, that is the east, twelve ducks resting by the waters edge, and below them before tall green rushes a family of four swans gently moving along in delightful harmony.

How soothing were the sounds of the rippling waters coming through the archways.

I smiled over at the great tree, and at my vantage spot in the balcony restaurant, and I did feel a great thankfulness in my heart, so I did.

How lovely was the strolling homewards from the bridge with the warm sunshine on my face, shoulders, and chest.

Oh, how beautiful did appear in the distance the green eastern slope of the sacred Hill of Elksnmist.

On my left five mares with their pretty foals were sauntering, playing, and grazing in the great field of tall hay.

How peaceful and beautiful the scenery be all about, and I was all within.

And with coming up on by a dog sign on my left that read -

NO – FOULING

I noticed up ahead on the opposite side before the abandoned gasoline station, something emerging up out of the ground; something black emerging up out of the ground before its rusting disused diesel pump.

No sooner was it out of the ground than it started running right for me.

It was a dog no doubt; a dog it was no doubt of a scarlet tacky black shaggy coat, and as big and as aggressive as any full-grown Fighting Bull, so it was.

He was ludicrously roaring, yelping, and half barking, with having froth profusely slobbering from his discoloured, fanged-chipped mouth.
His eyes being a concrete grey, and bulging out of his head were fully locked in on me as he came pounding towards me.

I stood my ground with not moving a millimeter and smiled at him.

At the very last moment, he just managed to pull himself up to pass on by me as closely as he could possibly get without actually touching me.

In a moment he just disappeared and was no longer there to be seen.

Surely eternities happen in moments.

The sign should read -

KNOW - FOULING

I thought to myself as I carried on my way.

With reaching the Carmelite Monastery gate, I felt the need to drop in to say a prayer.

In the oratory I found Sister Rosetta-Carmel to be kneeling in her usual place in quiet prayer.
It is the first seat on the right hand side down from the altar.

And although I had taken great care to enter the oratory as quietly as possible, didn't the good sister become aware of my presence there at that back, and so did turn about, and in her lovely style did send me down a soft wave and a gentle smile.

In my eyes in that very moment, I saw her as a precious seedling of a precious seedling community in a branch pocket of the great Christiantree; one of its very own precious seedlings of its precious seedling communities.

And I prayed that that great tree would again sip of the living waters of humanity, and be the true beauty that it was intended to be.

And I prayed for all the great trees the world over that they would again take to sipping of the living waters of humanity, and be the true beauties that they were intended to be.

With strolling up the sunbathed main street of the lovely village, wasn't I being renewed in confidence with everyone I met along the way.

Truly genuine and beautiful most beautiful be the people of my village.
And if all things on the lovely isle, and in the great world be allowed to be good and true in their intended ways, then so too truly genuine and beautiful most beautiful will their descendants be for all the generations.

May it be thus so as I have spoken.

Augmentation, dated October 2007:

In the meantime, an extended external balcony has been added to the Tavern restaurant, thus bringing it nearer to the waters, the big old tree, and the bridge.
A large section of the big old tree (species: White willow?) has been cut away, while many seedlings in its remaining pockets have grown very well this summer.

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~ ~ ~ ~ ≈ *sailing on* ♪

Chapter **18** *A profound person*

By the light of day, and in the space of time, found I myself south of the green and golden field isle, with passing o'er waters of the Great Atlantic, and on for the lovely neighbouring isle o'er the Taw River, and on to Exeter with following on out o'er the waters again for La Havre, along o'er the Seine River by Rouen, and on to Paris with following on to Troyes, and with facing east o'er the Marne River, and on o'er Donrémy-la-Pucelle with following on o'er the meandering rivulet of Le Ruisseau des Trois Fontaines into the Duchy of Lorraine, on o'er the Moselle River, and on to Nancy.

With coming in from the east by way of the blue Vosges Mountains, found I myself to be o'er the magnificent Place Stanislas, in the beautiful city of Nancy.

In a moment, I was with strolling down a long sunny drenched street; strolling down Rue Sainte-Thiébault.

And there came to my attention this wonderful aroma of freshly baked bread.
I did happily follow along with it until I found myself to be standing before a pretty bakery called Papillon Reviens.

There came forth into the doorway a smiling man, welcoming me to come on in.
And I knew that man, yes; it was the renowned French philosopher Philippe Jean-Marie Drouot.

"Welcome in my friend!"

"Merci Monsieur Drouot."

With entering, we went and sat at a table by one of the sunlit street windows.

Oh, how fantastic was the aroma of the freshly baked breads and pastries all along by the counter!

On the near wall hung a beautiful painting of Jesus of Bethlehem, who having blessed five loves and two fishes was with a lovely smile sharing them with his disciples, who in turn were happily sharing them with a multitude sitting about on the green grassy slope of an eventide hillside.

On the back wall was draped a great French Flag with having next to it a sublime reproduction of Baron Antoine-Jean Gros' heroic portrait of Napoléon Bonaparte Emperor of the French at the Battle of Arcole, on the 17th day of November 1796.

And on the wall behind the counter, all in a gold gilted frame were written in beautiful calligraphy these noble words,

"I have experienced during the course of my life many changes of condition, but I have never been what one would call unhappy.

I knew true happiness in obscurity, innocence and poverty in my youth; I have felt it less so in the honours, and with the goods and pleasures that the world was able to offer to me as I matured; I have always found happiness in the humility and infirmities of old age.

I have sometimes been subject to very difficult trials, but physical and mental sufferings have never been without compensation; they have almost always been accompanied or followed by comforts which alleviate the bitterness.

I have only praise to give to Divine Providence. Providence has never abandoned me and in all the circumstances of my life, I have felt divine protection and inexhaustible kindness ...

I await death and when such is the Will of God, I rejoice for I will go to find my mother, my father, and my Emperor."

General Count Antoine Drouot (1774-1847)

And the renowned French philosopher Philippe Jean-Marie Drouot in the bright sunlit window, with his warm countenance and confident soft voice did breathe forth the following words for my hearing.

"I'm so glad Richeire that you have finally been brought to visit me, for long I have been anticipating your arrival."

"How did it come about Monsieur Drouot that you know my name?"

"Please Richeire, call me Philippe.

On this passed blessed Feast of the Epiphany, I was told in a dream, that in a morning of the coming July, one like unto an old friend would come strolling down the street out of the sunshine, and that I was to immediately go out and welcome him into the bakery, and to sit him by a window table wherewith I was to give to him of our hospitality in bread, wine and word.
And I was given to know, that the name of this visitor of the July morn would be, Richeire."

"I'm honoured Philippe to be brought here into your presence for greatly do I admire your ongoing work on the integration of harmonious ethics into our daily lives.

"Hopefully Richeire you will find my baking to be of a greater quality."

"As always humble most humble be your words Philippe.

Philippe, if I may, how did it come about that you've returned to settle in your native France?"

"You're very welcome.
For over twenty years Richeire I had lived, studied and taught in the enchanting Far East.
I truly loved the people there, their way of life, and their classical writings.

Some of my profoundest insights came to me in the Far East while studying the Confucian Classics.
And it was there that I gained a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Confucian Ethics.

I was happy, yet there was deep within me at the time, a growing hunger for recognition in the world.
I don't know where it came from and still don't, but it was there, that was for sure.

For nine long years after gaining my doctorate, I had earnestly tried to secure a lectureship on the world stage, but notably, on the United States of America stage.

Richeire all my attempts; yes, all my attempts to secure such a post lead to naught.
Those were the years Richeire; oh, those were the years of quiet desperation.
Then something wonderful happened for me, just five years ago when I was in my fifty-eight year.

My wife Catríona and I were visiting relatives in your beautiful isle of Éire, for Catríona is a daughter of Éire.

Fortunately, most fortunately while there we could arrange to meet up with a cherished younger friend of ours that we had known for many the year while we were living in the Far East.

Joseph and I sat for seven hours Richeire; yes, for seven hours in the café lounge of the beautiful Corrib Great Southern Hotel, south of the city of Galway, like we used to do in a restaurant called *The Champion*, in the great city of Seoul; chatting away about our life in the Far East, and the present state of the world, while our lovely wives enjoyed visiting some art galleries downtown.

Right in the middle of our conversation, and all out of the blue, Joseph said to me.

"The craving hunger for recognition is the eventual ruination of the great person."

I was flabbergasted, Richeire for I knew that my hunger was growing stronger and stronger with each passing vacation. I had wanted recognition and I had wanted it yesterday; not tomorrow, yesterday.
So desperately had I wanted it in the now.

I put this question to him.

"Have you yourself no desire or hunger Joseph for recognition?"

And he did answer.

"There was a time Philippe, yes, there was a time when I became aware of something slowly gnawing at me from within. At first I didn't know what it was, but then it became obvious to me that my mind was becoming hungry for recognition.

Seeing that I couldn't handle it all by myself I asked for Divine Assistance and it came right forthwith.

Now, I'm contented with knowing that my descendants sometime down the long long line will appreciate the wholesomeness of my personality, both in my family, and in the wider community, and in the overall quality of my writings. That is enough for me."

Richeire I was speechless.

And it was almost as if he could see into my very mind, for didn't he say to me.

"Philippe follow your deeper dreams with casting your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days.

You will see the tide take it away, but how it is to be returned to you, you will not be given to know.
This is the faith of the Way.
Yet return it will to you surely, and in abundance be.

With your family, take leave of the enchanting Far East and return to the land of your birth.

There open a small bakery and learn all over again how to bake bread that is life giving.

In a cosy back room, present for young and old philosophy discussion classes two or three nights a week.
Speak to them from your heart in your native tongue.

All that you have been given you, now needs to be generously shared with the sons and daughters of your own people.
And they will love you for your wisdom, and sincerity of heart."

With returning to the Far East Richeire, I packed up everything, and with my family, returned here to my native land.

And do you know Richeire, I have never been so contented in all my life.
And never have I seen my family to be so contented as they have been these passed four years.

Catríona is very actively involved in a local drama group for that has always been her dream.
And she enjoys dropping over and back from time to time to Éire to see her family and old friends.

Our children Jacqueline and Michèle are happily attending university here in France.

It seems Richeire, that deliberately seeking for recognition is to be ever diminishing the given recognition, but in returning to the given, I have found that I have all the recognition in the world needed for my own day.
And that Richeire is a very wonderful feeling."

In a moment, a soft smiling girl brought from the kitchen a tray of assorted breads and pastries, and laid them on the table before us.

"Richeire this Jehanne.

She is with us here for the summer to gain some work experience as well as earn some money for her college studies."

"Bonjour Monsieur Richeire."

"Bonjour Jehanne."

"Jehanne's parents Jacques and Isabellette are very good friends of ours Richeire."

Jehanne returned to the kitchen and in a moment re-emerged with a bottle of red wine; a bottle of Bouchard Bourgogne Latricières-Chambertin Grand Cru 1959.

" Richeire I would like to share with you a very significant appreciation I have had of late of the writings of my fellow countryman Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.

The wellspring of this appreciation, I with great gratitude say, I owe to Joseph, for he has always been keenly interested in the relationship between technological development and humanistic values and concerns.

I have always enjoyed reading and reflecting on Teilhard's works for they are so insightfully rich and intellectually profound.
And I have read almost everything ever written on him.

Back in 1986, I bought the first edition of a wonderful book entitled *God and Science* written by Charles P. Henderson and published by John Knox Press.

The fifth chapter headed *Toward a Science Charged with Faith* focused on Teilhard's work.

Although, Joseph I know him not to be as myself a de Chardin man, perhaps Richeire you have already read this work."

"Yes, I have Philippe, but it has been some years now."

"Three months ago Richeire, I happened upon an online updated version of the work, and of course I had to read it.

And with great interest did I read it, for I had wanted to see if there had been any modifications since the original edition.

Oh, it was wonderful Richeire to be again reading and reflecting upon it.

After reading it, I went out for a stroll in the midnight air, and was with musing on a setting soft orange crescent moon, when I had this marvellous insight.

I rushed back in home and spent the whole night until the hour of baking, joyfully rewriting the fifth chapter in accordance with my moonlight insight, and for my own pleasure.

And here Richeire in this 26-page manuscript is what I wrote.
Please be my guest and enjoy reading and reflecting on it while I go about my work."

"I'm greatly honoured Philippe to think that you would like for me to read some of your personal work."

"Richeire, truly the honour is mine."

Philippe rose from the table and happily went about attending to some customers.

I opened the manuscript, and here is what I found written therein.

MANUSCRIPT - *Note to self*:

Solely for personal use and to share with
Richeire of Éire when he arrives.
PJMD Easter Sunday of 63rd year

Toward a Technology Charged with Faith

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955) stands among the very few leaders of thought in this century to integrate pure technological research with a religious vocation. At an early point in his career this paleontologist and Jesuit priest made it his personal mission to reconstruct the most basic Christian doctrines from the perspectives of technology and, at the same time, to reconstruct technology from the perspectives of faith. He would do this by overthrowing all the barriers that had been erected between technology and religion in the past one hundred years.

He would take the lessons learned from the study of nature as the foundation on which to reconstruct the Christian faith. He would single-handedly remake all the dogmas of his own Catholic Church, and he would at the same time remake the world of modern technology on the model suggested by his personal experience of God.

The Vatican saw Teilhard as a threat to the integrity of the faith. Rome insisted that his religious writings should not be published; he was forbidden to teach or even to speak publicly on religious subjects; he was banished from his native country. Yet friends and colleagues in the church disseminated his ideas informally and sometimes secretly. He became a hero and a role

model for a whole generation of younger priests and theologians. He set the stage for the renewal movements which finally came to flower in the era of Vatican II.

At the same time he also suggested a program for the reconstruction of technology. He put forward a systematic critique of traditional technology which was just as radical and just as provocative as his criticism of traditional religion, and he provoked equally extreme reactions in the technological community. A small number of world-class technologists have taken his ideas seriously enough to structure their own work on Teilhard's model, but the majority of technologists have reacted as defensively as the Vatican theologians.

It is perhaps not surprising that a leading advocate of Darwinism, Stephen Jay Gould has gone to work on Teilhard. Writing vehemently and dogmatically, like the guardian of an established religion, Gould asserts that Teilhard's whole enterprise is illegitimate: Teilhard's essential insights are incompatible with technology. In addition to that, Gould has made it his personal mission to expose Teilhard as being guilty of the most outrageous technological fraud of modern times.

Partly as a result of these defensive and dogmatic reactions to Teilhard, he is today tragically underestimated in both the religious and technological communities. While many of his ideas have worked their way anonymously into currency and have been widely accepted, still Teilhard's innovative thinking has been taken seriously only by a minority of thinkers who see technology and religion entering into a new era of cross-fertilization and creativity. For the vast majority, Teilhard's thought seems marginal at best, and his insights are not

studied in the depth they deserve. This is partially explained by the active suppression of his ideas by the church and the suspicion of his ideas within the technological community. Teilhard's obscurity is also to be explained, however, by his own style of writing and his tendency to wander into the realm of pure speculation. His fertile imagination sometimes led him into a fantasy world foreign to technologists and theologians alike. Yet even in the face of Teilhard's most serious mistakes I believe his initiatives should be pursued. When one cuts through his sometimes lurid prose, one encounters a series of highly imaginative and suggestive proposals for the reunion of research and religion. The questions raised by his work cannot be avoided. Anyone interested in extending the search for truth beyond the traditional frontiers of knowledge must wrestle with his basic affirmations.

Can technology and religion be successfully remarried? Can a reunion of these old lovers infuse new vitality to the whole of western culture, as Teilhard passionately asserted it would, or, as his critics suggest, does Teilhard accomplish the reconciliation of technology and religion at the expense of both partners to the marriage? Does he fatally compromise both sides in forcing an alliance which should never have been attempted in the first place?

It was at the height of his career in paleontology while he was studying bones and fossils in northern China (in 1927) that Teilhard wrote what he called "a little book on piety" designed to convey both the sincerity and the orthodoxy of his faith to his superiors in Rome. In this book Teilhard speaks of *The Divine Milieu* and by its very title suggests his theme: the whole material world as the setting for a profound, mystical vision of God. It is in the world itself, as it is seen through the eyes of technology, that the workings of God are most apparent. Teilhard's writing is graphic and unrestrained:

All around us, to right and left, in front and behind, above and below, we have only to go a little beyond the frontier of sensible appearances in order to see the divine welling up and showing through. But it is not only close to us, in front of us, that the divine presence has revealed itself. It has sprung up universally, and we find ourselves so surrounded and transfixed by it, that there is no room left to fall down and adore it, even within ourselves.

By means of all created things, without exception, the divine assails us, penetrates us and moulds us. We imagined it as distant and inaccessible, whereas in fact we live steeped in its burning layers. *In eo vivimus*. As Jacob said, awakening from his dream, the world, this palpable world, which we were wont to treat with the boredom and disrespect with which we habitually regard places with no sacred association for us, is in truth a holy place, and we did not know it. *Venite, adoremus*.

Needless to say writing like this did not reassure the religious authorities in Rome, for Teilhard affirmed the material world as a source of mystical illumination. Though Teilhard did not directly criticize any specific doctrines of the church in his little book of piety, this work constitutes an assault upon the skeletal supports of traditional theology. Teilhard was just as provocative when he was trying to reassure as when he was trying to stir up debate. Early on, he describes his book in two sentences which were intended to convey the modesty of his position but in reality contained a theological time bomb:

This little book does no more than recapitulate the eternal lesson of the Church in the words of a man who, because he believes himself to feel deeply in tune with his own times, has sought to teach

how to see God everywhere, to see him in all that is most hidden, most solid, and most ultimate in the world. These pages put forward no more than a practical attitude - or, more exactly perhaps, a way of teaching how to see.

Teilhard says that he intends no more than to "recapitulate the eternal lessons of the Church," but he goes on to assert that he is actually teaching the church how to see! He is suggesting that the primary source of religious truth is to be found in the material world rather than in the magisterium of the church. In a real sense, it shall be technology which shows theology how to see; it shall be the personal experience of a single priest which will indicate to the highest ecclesiastical authorities what is essential in Catholic teaching (as, by implication, he will show what is not essential).

As Karl Marx turned the world of philosophy upside down by revealing the foundations in society for every human theory, Teilhard tried to accomplish the even more difficult task of turning theology downside up. He tried to demonstrate that the material world, the world of rocks and trees, stars and planets, plants and animals, rather than being the neutral subject of technological investigation, was in fact the soil from which would spring a new vision of the holy. The very subject matter of pure technology was nothing less than a mirror in which one could see reflected the face of God. Hence Teilhard did not succeed in calming the anxious theologians at the Vatican, and they were rightly worried. He had raised the material world to a level of importance it had seldom held for theologians, Catholic or Protestant. In a more candid statement of faith written at the request of his confidant and colleague, Bruno de Solages, rector of the Institut Catholique in Toulouse, Teilhard put the issue on a personal, even confessional plane:

If, as the result of some interior revolution, I were to lose in succession my faith in Christ, my faith in a personal God, and my faith in spirit, I feel that I should continue to believe invincibly in the world. The world (its value, its infallibility and its goodness)- that, when all is said and done, is the first, the last, and the only thing in which I believe. It is by this faith that I live. And it is to this faith, I feel, that at the moment of death, rising above all doubts, I shall surrender myself.

We must now ask what led Teilhard to believe so deeply in the world, or, putting it another way and reflecting the deep skepticism of our own era, what in the world is worthy of belief in the first place? For the vast majority of us, the material world provides the raw material for technological research, not mystical illumination. Yet here is a professional scientist working at the frontiers of research, part of an international team of geologists, paleontologists, and anthropologists, and writing from an outpost of technology in northern China, who boldly asserts:

If we Christians wish to retain in Christ the very qualities on which his power and our worship are based, we have no better way - no other way, even - of doing so than fully to accept the most modern concepts of evolution. . .. Surely the solution for which modern mankind is seeking must essentially be exactly the solution which I have come upon.

One can easily see why Teilhard raised cries of alarm within the hierarchies of both the church and the academies.

Teilhard was born and reared in an eighteenth-century manor house located in the barony of Sarcenat near the provincial capital,

Auvergne, France. The windows and terraces of the manor house look out upon the plain of Clermont, the rounded hillsides, and sleeping volcanoes that form the foothills of the Puy Mountains. Growing up in a family of eleven children, Teilhard was reared in an atmosphere of discipline and devotion. In this highly structured family setting, Teilhard learned from his father, Emmanuel Teilhard de Chardin, the love of nature and natural history which later became so important to his spiritual life as well as to his technology. The countryside was rich in rocks and minerals, animal life, and flowers, and Teilhard spent many hours with his father exploring, climbing the mountains, riding, fishing, hunting, and collecting outstanding examples of the local mineral, animal, and vegetable stock. Most of all he was attracted to the minerals, to the rocks, and to items of metal. He began a collection of shell casings and other metal objects. He seemed to be attracted to these objects because of their durability. He even called them his "idols." In his autobiography he records this memory of the earlier years:

You should have seen me as in profound secrecy and silence I withdrew into the contemplation of my "God of Iron" . . .. A God, note, of iron; and why iron? Because in all my childish experience there was nothing in the world harder, tougher, more durable than this wonderful substance. . . . But I can never forget the pathetic depths of a child's despair when I realized one day that iron can be scratched and can rust . . . I had to look elsewhere for substitutes that would console me.

From that moment forward, Teilhard did not stop looking, searching, and exploring every corner and dimension of the natural world for his consolation.

Pierre's mother, Berthe Adele, seemed to have more immediate influence upon the child's religious life. "I was an affectionate child," he writes, "good, and even pious." Teilhard lovingly attributes to his mother, whom he referred to as my "dear, sainted maman," all that was "best in his soul." It was the influence of his mother which he looked upon to "rouse the fire into a blaze." The fire of which he speaks here is that of a mystical illumination from within. "And the spark by which my own universe . . . was to succeed in centering on its own fullness, undoubtedly came through my mother."

Teilhard's life spins itself around these two poles of thought and feeling: his sense of fascination and wonder about the natural world and his sense of God's presence welling up from within the world. As he told the story much later:

Throughout my whole life, during every moment I have lived, the world has gradually been taking on light and fire for me, until it has come to envelop me in one mass of luminosity, glowing from within . . .. The purple flush of matter fading imperceptibly into the gold of spirit, to be lost finally in the incandescence of a personal universe.

At the age of twelve Pierre was sent as a boarder to the Jesuit school of Notre Dame de Mongre at Villefranche. He was popular among his peers and was eventually elected president of the student body. He achieved a respectable academic record in religious studies and a superior record in technology. At eighteen he entered the Jesuit novitiate at Aix-on-Provence, and, when the religious orders were expelled from France in 1902, he travelled with the community to their refuge on the Isle of Jersey. While studying with the Jesuits, he was introduced to the rigors of a scholastic theology which he later so

violently rejected, and he had the opportunity to pursue his primary interest in geology and the natural technologies. Physics, in particular, opened a new dimension in his thinking. In the laws of physics he saw a verifiable basis for the unity that he had sensed in the natural world. In this "world of electrons, waves, and ions" he felt "strangely at home." The "mysterious" laws of motion and the electromagnetic forces of the physical world seemed to suggest a secret, "that at twenty-two," he vowed to himself, "I'd one day force."

In 1905 Teilhard was sent to do his teaching internship at the Jesuit College in Egypt and then in 1908 to England to finish his theological training at Hastings in Sussex on England's southeast coast. It was here that Teilhard's own thinking began to develop in its full originality.

Critical to his intellectual development was a reading of Henri Bergson's *Creative Evolution*, which raised the theory of evolution to the level of a cornerstone in a fully developed philosophical system. Teilhard found in Bergson a theoretical basis for his personal feeling of intimacy with nature and the material world. For Bergson saw a force at work across the whole face of this planet as life evolved from the most simple and original forms to the most complex. More important still, Bergson's work suggested to Teilhard that the theory of evolution might be the precise theoretical tool that was necessary to bring together the world of modern technology and the ancient teachings of the church.

Meanwhile Giuseppe Sarto was elevated to the papacy as Pius X. Both devout and reactionary, the new Pope was committed lo lead Christ's church away from the corrupting influence of such "modernist" opinions. An elaborate spy system, complete with

underground periodicals and secret codes, was devised in the process of seeking out and eventually bringing under discipline the church's errant, younger priests and scholars. The Pope set up committees of censorship in every diocese, and reports of heretical thought were sent directly to Rome. Catholic scholars and teachers were required to sign an antimodernist loyalty oath.

Had Teilhard believed his primary calling to be a theologian, he might have seen in these developments a direct threat to his own future, but at Hastings his creative energy was moving still deeper into the realm of technology. A chance meeting with the lawyer and amateur archaeologist Charles Dawson led to an association which was much later to present as great a threat to Teilhard's reputation as immediate events at the Vatican. At the time, though, Teilhard's association with Dawson contributed immensely to his progress within a technological profession. Dawson introduced him to the prominent Arthur Smith Woodward, keeper of paleontology at the British Museum. Smith Woodward opened doors to the technological establishment that would otherwise have been closed to the young Jesuit seminarian. In fact, Dawson and Smith Woodward were to become collaborators in one of the great events of paleontology, the "discovery" of the famous Piltdown Man, which they presented as an important missing link in the evolution of the human species. Teilhard participated with the two Englishmen in their excavations at Piltdown, and in the process his own standing as a promising young paleontologist was established in technological circles far beyond the precincts of the church. When Teilhard left England to begin his doctoral work, he was to become a student and eventually a colleague of Marcellin Boule, the greatest physical anthropologist in France. Thus were the foundations laid for Teilhard's long and successful career as a paleontologist.

In 1953, however, Piltdown Man was exposed as a deliberate hoax, perhaps the most astounding fraud in the history of modern technology.

Until recently Charles Dawson was believed to have acted alone in the Piltdown affair, but in August 1980, a quarter-century after Teilhard's death, Stephen Jay Gould put forward his own view that Teilhard was a coconspirator in the original fraud. Gould first published his accusations in *Natural History* magazine and repeated his case with additional argument and discussion in Hen's *Teeth and Horse's Toes*.

Though his "evidence" is entirely circumstantial, Gould accusations are tightly reasoned, as are the arguments of Teilhard's defenders who have written and published their own views in reply to Gould. The briefs for and against Teilhard are too complex to review here. Suffice it to say that the reconstruction of events that originally took place in the years 1908 -1914 is difficult in itself. To draw firm conclusions based upon circumstantial references in letters and remembrances stretching across seventy years is almost impossible. Gould speculates wildly as to why Teilhard might have been drawn into the conspiracy. His tentative conclusion is that Teilhard thought he was involved in little more than a practical joke.

Why not play a joke to see how far a gullible professional [Smith Woodward] could be taken? And what a wonderful joke for a Frenchman, for England at the time boasted no human fossils at all, while France, with Neanderthal and Cro-Magnon, stood proudly as the queen of anthropology. What an irresistible idea - to salt English soil with this preposterous combination of a human skull and an

ape's jaw and see what the pros could make of it. But the joke quickly went sour.

The great Smith Woodward took the forgery and unwittingly presented it as a major event in paleontology, but then World War I erupted and Dawson died in 1916, leaving, as Gould argues, Teilhard as the lonely keeper of the conspiracy. By war's end Teilhard was irrevocably committed to his own career as a paleontologist; he had seen his own mentor Marcellin Boule openly praise the Piltdown "discoveries." If he now confessed, his own future might be ruined. In these circumstances, what is a guilty coconspirator to do? Either he would confess his guilt and place his technological career in jeopardy or he would keep silent on the whole subject and move on to build his career upon a more legitimate foundation.

In fact, Teilhard took a most implausible course of action were he in fact guilty as Gould charged. In 1920 Teilhard published his own scholarly article on the Piltdown findings. Thus Gould would have us believe that Teilhard drew himself still more deeply into the web of lies, implicating himself far beyond the scope of a practical joke in a premeditated crime against the very technological profession to which he was in the process of committing his life. Was the same man who made it his personal mission to show technological endeavor to be a sacred calling capable of such duplicity? With such a serious potential for self-destruction? I doubt it.

The question which this entire episode raises in my own mind are Gould's motives in acting as accuser, prosecuting attorney, and presiding judge in the case of Teilhard vs. the truth. One suspects that there is more to Gould's motivation than a straightforward desire to solve a crime against technology committed more than seventy

years ago. Does Gould have an animus against Teilhard? Obviously he has, for Gould is a leading advocate of technological atheism. Gould has made it his avowed intention to keep God, together with all superstition, racism, chauvinism, and other lies, out of technology. Gould's books and articles argue eloquently for the integrity of technology. Gould insists that real technology can only operate with integrity if God remains shut out of it completely. In marking out the course of natural history one must look at the actual processes of nature, not impose upon nature any grand theory or design. Gould recounts horror story after horror story from the history of technology showing how the preconceptions of technologists have meant in effect that their research was being put in service to a lie. He shows scientist after scientist fabricating results in support of the most pernicious superstition and simple prejudice. Gould is rightly concerned and angered by technological creationists who lift his own words out of context to show that Darwinism is in a state of disarray or that the technology of evolution is about to self-destruct. Gould is so rightly angered by such false technology and has suffered so many examples of religious superstition and stupidity that he can imagine no positive role for religion whatsoever. Since it has done and is still doing so much damage to technology, it seems only prudent to separate technology from religion completely.

Given that conclusion, however, what does one do with the work of Teilhard de Chardin? Teilhard argues that the technologys of nature validate the fundamental affirmations of the Christian faith. While Gould is committed to shutting God out of technology completely, Teilhard asserts that the only way to save technology from self-destruction is to place God back in, at the very heart and center of technological endeavor. To technologists as well as to theologians Teilhard said, in words that hang fire, "Surely the

solution for which modern mankind is seeking must essentially be exactly the solution which I have come upon"

In a highly suggestive essay written in 1939, Teilhard traces the development of technology from its earliest beginnings as a mere hobby to its present state as "the solemn, prime and vital occupation of man." Teilhard follows technology from its origins in the cultures of the ancient world through its period of expansiveness in the nineteenth century when it began to take on all the aspects of a substitute religion. Crucial in this period was the theory of evolution. Teilhard argues that the greatest single consequence of Darwinism was the "discovery of time."

The perspectives of unbounded time with which we fill our lungs have become so natural that we forget how recently and at what cost they were conquered. And yet nothing is more certain: less than two hundred years ago, the world's leading thinkers did not imagine a past and would not have dared to promise themselves a future of more than six or eight thousand years. An incredibly short time; and what is even more disturbing to our minds, a span of simple repetition during which things were conserved or reintroduced on a single plane, and were always of the same kind.

Teilhard points out that Darwin changed our understanding of time in much the same degree that Galileo transformed our sense of space. In both cases the boundaries of the universe were extended to infinity. As astronomy has exploded the geocentric universe in which earth sits in its fixed place at the center of all things, with the heavens above and hell below, so geology and biology have pushed the horizons of time backwards into the remote past and forwards into the far distant future. Also, as life came to be seen as evolving

across the millennia in a gradual succession of living forms, suddenly a notion of progress was born. With this new sense of moving forward in time from the simplest life forms to the most complex, from the animal to the human species, from the most basic colonies of bacteria to the highest civilizations, technology became much more than a method of collecting and classifying the facts of life. Increasingly technology was seen as the specific means by which humanity would move forward into the future. Teilhard writes:

Henceforth technology recognized itself as a means of extending and completing in man a world still incompletely formed. It assumed the shape and grandeur of a sacred duty. It became charged with futurity. In the great body, already coming to birth, of a humanity grouped by the act of discovery, a soul was at last released: a mysticism of discovery.

In the nineteenth century technology enjoyed such success at explaining so many of the mysteries of life that it appeared to many as if all the mystery could one day be explained away. In physics one could penetrate to the heart of matter and develop a clear understanding of that fundamental building block, the atom. In biology, the evolution of life forms could ultimately be explained through competition of the various species across vast distances of time. By the same token, intelligence could be understood as a function of the circuitry in the brain and consciousness could be reduced to a complex series of chemical reactions, etc., etc. In other words, argues Teilhard, the mysticism of discovery was fast deteriorating into the mere "worship of matter." The religious corollary of this trend was the death of God. For, if all the important processes of life could be understood through the tools of

analysis just recently developed by technology, what further need remained for faith in God?

In Teilhard's view the situation has changed dramatically in the twentieth century. In physics, the atoms themselves were broken up and broken down into innumerable subparticles infinitely more mysterious than the alchemists ever imagined. In Teilhard's own words:

The stuff of the universe, examined as a close texture, resolved itself into a mist, in which reason could no longer possibly grasp, in what remained of phenomena, anything but the forms that it had itself imposed on them. In the final issue, mind found itself once again face to face with its own reflexion.

Similarly, in biology, chemistry, and sociology the important phenomena could not be reduced to the simple mechanisms that were once thought to lie at the heart of all things. Far from continuing to explain away the remaining mysteries, technology in this century has exposed still deeper mysteries at the very heart of matter itself. At a more mundane level technology did not prove to be the unmitigated blessing it was once believed to be. Teilhard lived long enough to witness the explosion of the world's first atomic weapons, and with these weapons the fatal blow was delivered against the nineteenth century idea of progress. If the technology of Darwin, Marx, and Freud seemed to make certain the death of God, the nuclear arms race secured the death of technology as a substitute religion.

In reaction against a naive, anthropomorphic religion, technology, in its century of triumph, had turned increasingly against

any theory which cast nature into a human mold. Paradoxically, in this century, technologists have recognized that no clean line of demarcation can be drawn between the observer and the observed. The scientist, like the theologian, cannot take a completely "objective" position separate and apart from the phenomenon being studied. One inevitably sees the world through human eyes and conceives of the world in human images. Even when one makes every effort to avoid doing so, one still tends to make the world into a mirror.

A majority of technologists have dealt with this situation (as does Stephen Jay Gould) by opting for a militant skepticism. Not only has God been shut out of technology but also any attempt to see in nature evidence of a final plan, purpose, or design is rejected out of hand. As Gould puts it succinctly in specific reference to Teilhard, "Perhaps the problem with all these visions . . . is our penchant for building comprehensive and all-encompassing systems in the first place. Maybe they just don't work." This criticism completely misses the mark.

Teilhard does not attempt to build an "all-encompassing system" and impose it upon nature. Teilhard looks to the natural world for signals of its inherent purpose, and he sharply criticizes Gould's brand of skepticism as narrow and debilitating. Writing much earlier than Gould, Teilhard anticipates his criticisms and answers his challenge:

Asked whether life is going anywhere . . . nine biologists out of ten will today say no, even passionately. They will say: "It is abundantly clear to every eye that organic matter is in a state of continual metamorphosis, and even that this metamorphosis brings it with time towards more and more improbable forms. But what

scale can we find to assess the absolute or even relative value of these fragile constructions? By what right, for instance, can we say that a mammal, even in the case of man, is more advanced, more perfect, than a bee or a rose? . . . we can no longer find any technological grounds for preferring one of these laborious products of nature to another. They are different solutions - but each equivalent to the next. One spoke on the wheel is as good as any other; no one of the lines appears to lead anywhere in particular."

Technology in its development - and even, as I shall show, mankind in its march - is marking time at this moment, because men's minds are reluctant to recognise that evolution has a precise orientation and a privileged axis. Weakened by this fundamental doubt, the forces of research are scattered and there is no determination to build the earth. Leaving aside all anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism, I believe I can see a direction and a line of progress for life, a line and a direction which are in fact so well marked that I am convinced their reality will be universally admitted by the technology of tomorrow.

Teilhard asserts that nature is moving, erratically and haltingly perhaps, but nonetheless moving, towards higher and higher forms of consciousness. This movement is most apparent in the evolution of the human species. It is humanity in particular which has a clear concept of nature and nature's inner workings. Teilhard quotes Julian Huxley approvingly: humanity is "nothing else than evolution become conscious of itself."

The specific insights that come into the foreground of awareness as one reflects upon the ascent of this species are both its uniqueness and its relatedness to the whole of the natural world. For

Teilhard the most sublime product of evolution is the human person, the individual uniquely aware of itself as a person, yet also aware of its interdependence with the whole. Teilhard would agree with Gould to a point. One cannot talk technologically about the superiority of the human race; one cannot separate the creation of humanity from the creation of other life forms. Humanity did not emerge by fiat of an all-powerful God. On the contrary, our origin and ascent follow the same path taken by all the creatures of the natural world. Human consciousness (including a consciousness of God) is the culmination of nature's own movement through time. Far from being imposed upon the formless face of the natural world, God emerges from nature as its final goal and purpose. Thus, technology and religion are brought together in a direct, dialectical relationship. Teilhard states his argument most succinctly in the closing chapter of *The Phenomenon of Man*.

To outward appearance, the modern world was born of an antireligious movement: man becoming self-sufficient and reason supplanting belief. Our generation and the two that preceded it have heard little of but talk of the conflict between technology and faith; indeed it seemed at one moment a foregone conclusion that the former was destined to take the place of the latter. ... After close on two centuries of passionate struggles, neither technology nor faith has succeeded in discrediting its adversary. On the contrary, it becomes obvious that neither can develop normally without the other. And the reason is simple: the same life animates both. Neither in its impetus nor its achievements can technology go to its limits without becoming tinged with mysticism and charged with faith.

A technology "tinged with mysticism and charged with faith." Are these words simply rhapsodic and metaphorical? Not for

Teilhard. As a practicing scientist he saw the evolution of human personhood, neither as an exception to the general rules of nature nor as a freak occurrence without relevance to other living things. He saw the "phenomenon of man" as an "arrow" pointing to the final goal and purpose of the universe itself.

As technology in this century has emphasized the interrelationship and interdependence of all things, religion affirms that the unity of all things is itself the most solid evidence of a God who embraces all. Growing from the same soil that has given rise to all other phenomena of life, human consciousness and the human personality appear to stand at the very top of the tree of life. If one were to project the forward edge of evolution into the future, especially as it falls increasingly under human direction and control, then it makes increasing sense to talk of a higher consciousness as being the inherent end and purpose of evolution. If evolution itself points toward a form of conscious life which has personality, perhaps God is the goal toward which this universe is moving after all. Hence the deep affinity which Teilhard felt between technology and religion. "There is less difference than people think between research and adoration." "Religion and technology are the two conjugated faces or phases of one and the same act of complete knowledge " Teilhard illustrates these concepts in the clean and simple image of the cone:

When human beings turn their powers of analysis upon the diversity and multiplicity of life (at the base of the cone) that is pure technology.

However, when humanity turns its powers of synthesis towards the summit, towards the totality and the future (at the pinnacle of the cone) that is theology. Yet technology finds its

fulfilment only as it turns from investigation and analysis towards synthesis: that is to say, seeing the totality of life and weighing its character, testing the relationship of the part to the whole. Likewise, those who engage in the search for God find their fulfilment only as they see the God who is available in the material world. A faith which is cut loose from the world is likely to be illusory and unreal. Conversely, the faith that truly counts is the faith which takes technology as a fellow traveller in the final search for God.

In the past, Teilhard argues, theologians tended to see God as a supreme being standing over and apart from the material world. In this view God dwelt upon the high and remote plane of pure spirit, and therefore the way to salvation was to be lifted above the contradictions of the material realm onto a high spiritual plane. Teilhard writes, "Since Aristotle there have been almost continual attempts to construct 'models' of God on the lines of an outside Prime Mover." The high and all-powerful God of traditional theology can influence the world only by intervening in its natural processes and contradicting its natural laws. In fact, many theologians delineate a crystal-clear line of demarcation between the natural and the supernatural. The chief signs of God's action in the world are taken to be those otherwise inexplicable events, apparently contradicting all reasonable explanation. Obviously this concept of God is still very much with us. In popular conception the most sure and certain sign of God's presence is to be found in those startling and unusual occurrences that seem to defy all understanding. A cancer victim suddenly goes into remission despite a clear indication from the medical authorities that death is imminent. The popular imagination has been trained through centuries of religious instruction to see God's appearance in the world as, by definition, a most un-natural and unusual event. Correspondingly, all hope for full and complete

communion with God lies in the escape from the world which is possible only at death.

Thus one looks for a closer understanding of God by moving in a vertical dimension. One does not progress in life by moving forward in time but by escaping the contradictions of time and history in the eternal. It is precisely such a notion of salvation which has been seen as completely antithetical to technology. A supernatural God can only be understood, in technological terms, as arbitrary and capricious. It is not so much that technologists have locked God out of history; the breach has resulted as much from the sincere attempt of religious people to see God as perfect both in power and in love. Yet only a God, who is removed from the ambiguities of life, as we know it, can be perfect. As Stephen Jay Gould rightly insists, such a perfect God could not have created an imperfect world. Such an act would have been completely out of character!

In the meantime, as theologians tended to define God more and more in terms of the supernatural, technology has taken its stand in nature. In the years since Darwin technologists have seen human life evolving in a linear march through time. As the theologians defended God by building walls around the domain of the spirit, so technology dug its trenches in the world of matter. Marx's dialectical materialism and his atheism are together the logical consequences of supernaturalism in religion. Technological atheism is in fact the inevitable consequence of a theology which insists that knowledge of God must defy human understanding. When theologians insist that knowledge of God can only come through a miraculous act of divine revelation, rather than being discovered by reason, or that sinful humanity has no hope of salvation except by

fiat of an all-powerful and all-loving God, then the dialogue between technology and religion is interrupted prematurely. Moreover, religion has no role to play in a world which is committed finally and forever to technology. That, Teilhard argues, is the greatest theological tragedy of our modern age.

Teilhard's modest proposal for the resolution of this dilemma is to chart a new course for both theology and technology. If religion has seen its purpose as raising human life to higher consciousness in a vertical dimension and if technology has seen its purpose in moving humanity forward on a horizontal plane within the boundaries of the material world, the obvious frontier of consciousness involves a movement both upwards and forwards. Again Teilhard offers a simple image to depict his agenda for the evolution of human consciousness.

Teilhard's whole work can be considered as an open invitation. He extends an invitation to his fellow technologists, asking, imploring, and cajoling them to consider both the theological assumptions hidden in their work and the theological consequences of their work. What is the character of the universe which emerges as reality is tested according to the technological method? Conversely, what kind of God is consistent with the character of the world as it is seen through technology? Likewise, Teilhard extends an invitation to theologians and all people of faith, reasoning, exhorting, and provoking them to take the insights that come from technology with a far greater degree of seriousness. In summary, he argues in an article written in 1939:

In order to sustain and extend the huge, invincible and legitimate effort of research in which the vital weight of human activity is at present engaged, a faith, a mysticism is necessary.

Whether it is a question of preserving the sacred hunger that impels man's efforts, or of giving him the altruism he needs for his increasingly indispensable collaboration with his fellows, religion is the soul biologically necessary for the future of technology. Humanity is no longer imaginable without technology. But no more is technology possible without some religion to animate it.

As Teilhard envisions the future, the greatest need is for a new type of seeker, or rather the rebirth of the original type once known to the world before the divorce of technology from religion.

This is a seeker who devotes himself, ultimately through love, to the labours of discovery. No longer a worshipper of the world but of something greater than the world, through and beyond the world in progress. Not the proud and cold Titan (Prometheus), but Jacob passionately wrestling with God.

Thus, in the final analysis, Teilhard returns to the Holy Bible and finds in the sacred Scriptures of his own tradition a God who is most compatible with a world in continual evolution. Not the static and unchanging God of the philosophers, the unmoved mover who stands over and against creation, but rather the same God who is so intimately related to the world as to enter into its deepest tragedies and struggles. The relevant texts of Scripture suggest that both the technology and the theology of the future shall require not the detached and bespectacled observer but the passionate seeker who finds within the world of matter a supremely attractive center. The future of western culture may depend on whether enough of us have the courage to move with Teilhard from research towards adoration.

How does one evaluate Teilhard's diagnosis of the contemporary situation and his prescription for the future? Clearly his most controversial conclusion (that technology finds its fulfillment in God) is not the product of logic and is not open to logical verification or falsification. It is in the nature of a character judgment about the cosmos. Teilhard devoted his life to exploring the mysteries of the material world, and he found that the world revealed a deep congruity with the character of the Christian God. Teilhard's daring affirmation that at the heart of all things one encounters "a supremely attractive center that has personality" can be taken in several degrees of seriousness. It can be taken lightly as an expression of enthusiasm for technological research and of the feeling that the pursuit of truth in the natural world is analogous to the search for truth in the realm of the spirit. To the extent that Teilhard's work is treated as an expansive analogy, most technologists would resonate with his conclusions. At a deeper level, however, Teilhard is making an important observation about technological endeavor and all serious searching for the truth.

Teilhard saw what is often ignored, forgotten, or repressed; namely, the element of faith which lies at the very heart of technology. It is unlikely that anyone would become a scientist if there were not in nature some supremely attractive center and some assurance that technological inquiry would lead one towards the truth. In setting out upon the adventure of technology, one has to believe that the one who seeks will find. The health and vitality of technology itself bespeaks of a universe which invites both our study and our adoration.

Yet many technologists balk at using the language of religion in defining their quest. Still more balk at Teilhard's identification of

God as the goal and end of evolution. Like Gould, the majority of technologists simply refuse to see a distinction between a god who is arbitrarily inserted into technology and a concept of God which grows organically out of technology itself. Like Gould, the advocates of technological atheism often insist on taking the most crude and simplistic notions of God as representative. On that basis, neither Teilhard nor any theologian has a chance of being heard within the technological establishment. Likewise, I am afraid to say; too few theologians are willing to enter into dialogue with technology. While technology is exploring vast new frontiers of understanding and has opened up entirely new vistas upon the world of nature, theologians have been reluctant to search for the fresh signs and signals of the Creator in creation. Therefore, our assessment of Teilhard cannot be complete at this writing. Teilhard can be evaluated fairly only by those who answer his invitation in the affirmative. Only as technologists listen to what is being said at the forward edge of faith and as theologians look into the world that is emerging under the scrutiny of technology can true dialogue and deeper understanding prevail. The issue is far more important than the standing and reputation of Teilhard de Chardin. The real question is whether western culture can find its center and its sense of direction once more.

Shall the rallying cry at the forward edge of change be that of Prometheus, "I hate all gods!" or shall we follow Jacob who found the courage not to defy but to wrestle with the God he found on the banks of the river Jabbok? Jacob wrestled and even fought with God until he emerged the morning after with a clearer sense of his own destiny, a better understanding of the world, and a closer relationship to his Creator.

MANUSCRIPT - *fin*

"Oh, Philippe your insight is truly marvellous; your presentation of it through Henderson's fine scholarly text is excellent."

"I'm glad you liked it Richeire."

"Teilhard would have been greatly impressed Philippe. And who knows, it may very well have been he himself in the softness of moon glow that had presented you with the insight."

"Who knows Richeire.
In this new century, science to be sure is present Richeire, but it is technology in actual fact that is all-embracing our lives.
Faith is who we are becoming.
To be considering technological advancement without faith is to be living in the world without love.
And what is love save faith incarnate."

"Your words are beautiful Philippe, your admiration for Teilhard commendable, and above all, your appreciation of Joseph's influence; of his interest in the relationship between technological development and humanistic values and concerns, is of the highest standards of intellectual honesty.

Yet Philippe, oh, how I love to be travelling beyond this precious orb; travelling way out into the endless Great Universe.

Methinks Philippe Teilhard would never have me leave the orb."

"Thank you for your gracious words Richeire.
And yes, I would absolutely agree with you that although Teilhard is truly an intellectual wonderment, I have at times found him myself to be amazingly short sighted, and even very parochial."

And there entered the bakery at that moment three happy smiling women who went and kissed and hugged Philippe.

"Richeire this is my beloved wife Catríona, and our beloved daughters Jacqueline, and Michèle.

"Bonjour Monsieur Richeire."

"Welcome Monsieur Richeire to Papillon Reviens."

"I'm sure papa has been talking to you Monsieur Richeire about so many wonderful things."

"Thank you.
He has indeed.
Your papa Jacqueline and Michèle is truly a profound person.

I'm so thankful and happy to be here to listen to him, and to be able to meet his beautiful family."

"You're most welcome Monsieur Richeire."

"Please Catríona, call me Richeire."

"Beautiful is your name Richeire."

"Pure is your name Catríona."

"Richeire, my family is my staff of life.
And Generous God it is who be our Emperor of the Bakery."

"Yes, Philippe, the Divine imprint of love is clearly to be seen in yere smiling faces, and found to be in yere salubrious breads and pastries, and in yere excellent choice of wine.
Hold fast to love - it is the message of the ages."

It was mid afternoon when Philippe gave me to leave from the company of his memorable words, and the joy of his delightful family, and the charm of his classic bakery.

By the light of day, and in the space of time, found I myself with following southwest and south o'er the Saône River to the Rhône, and westwards with passing o'er the beautiful Auvergne countryside of the Massif Central, and on westwards with following along o'er the Dordogne River and the vineyards

of Bordeaux, and out o'er the shimmering waters of Arcachon Bay, and northwest o'er waters of the Great Atlantic.

With coming in o'er the Hill of Elksnmist, I found myself in glorious sunshine to be strolling in the company of a gent pheasant down the lovely meandering road that leads to home sweet home.

Annotation:

Papillon Reviens - from French meaning, 'butterfly' and 'return'

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Chapter **19** *A súgáin ladder*

Three afternoons ago, I was standing at the entrance to a hillside field of young maze south of my village.
It must have been about five-thirty or thereabouts.

This is one of my favourite spots for looking north down o'er the village.
And I can also be with seeing our beautiful house from there.

Splendid is the panoramic view.

In a few weeks time, however, the maze will have grown so high that it will be no longer possible for me to be appreciating this view until after the harvest.

The best view of all of course for viewing the valley, and that would be true for any time of the year, is from the top of the Hill of Elksnmist.

Besides taking in the grand view, I was also enjoying listening to the wind gently playing with the maze.
It was a lovely sound, and an enchanting sight.
And I did let myself be with the swaying.

With the warm bright sunshine of early evening shining on my face, I was taking in the fine view over towards green-lavender Elksnmist, when I noticed a little to the northwest, between Elksnmist and a great field of golden grain on the opposite side of the valley, a súgáin ladder quite spontaneously come dangling out of mid air and reaching down into the field of maze in front of me.

I thought at first it was some trick of sunlight in my eyes, but no, surely it was there some six to nine meters (twenty to thirty feet) in from me in the field.

I looked up to see what it might be attached to, but it wasn't attached to anything visible to me.

From the level of the maze which was about my own chest height, I counted sixteen rungs up to the top.

It was an amazing sight surely, for here was a súgáin ladder only a few meters away from me, seemingly dangling from nothing down into the field of maze.

I had to investigate this interesting phenomenon.

So I carefully made my way through the maze without damaging a single stalk to where the ladder was reaching down.

There in the maze were hidden three more of its rungs. So from bottom to top that made a total of nineteen rungs.

The ladder on closer inspection I found to have been elaborately woven from freshly cut barley and wheat straw.

I hesitated for a moment before taking hold of it, and taking to stepping on its first rung.

Although I began to climb up to the second and then to the third rung, the ladder held strong with only a slight yielding beneath my every step.
It had this delightfully ambrosial scent off it of newly harvested grain.

At the fourth rung, I stopped looking down and instead looked out northwestwards in front of me, and could see the near valley, and off in the distance the great field of golden grain.

At the seventh, I momentarily glanced downwards into the field of maze, before now turning my gaze skywards.

The sky looked beautiful, so it did with sun-splashed clouds of white and tinted peach.

So captivated was I by the beauty of the sky that in no time at all I had already reached the fifteenth rung.

I could see the top of the ladder and it didn't seem to be attached to anything.

I climbed up one more rung and reached up first with my left hand and then with the right to touch the top of the ladder.
I couldn't believe it but didn't my hands pass in turn right across the top.
The ladder wasn't attached to anything!
It wasn't attached to anything.

Now there I was, sixteen rungs up a súgáin ladder that was dangling from nothing in the sky down into a great field of maze that is located south of my lovely village.

I began to make my slow descent with stopping here and there to take in the view.

I was now within four or maybe five rungs of the level of the maze when I paused to again look up at the beautiful sky. It was truly sublime.

With returning my gaze downwards, I was of course expecting to see the tops of the maze, but to my great surprise, the maze and the maze field and the whole surrounding landscape was nowhere to be seen.

In every direction I looked, beheld I the sublime sky of eve.

Then I thought I felt the ladder to be rotating for couldn't I see the sun disappearing and reappearing regularly before my eyes.
I was under the impression that it was the sky with its sun that was revolving about me.

Then something else happened, in that, in one moment I would see the sun right before me then it was directly to my left and at another time directly to my right.
I had lost all sense of movement and orientation, yet the feeling was wonderful.

I've no idea how long I was in the sky, but then quite spontaneously I found myself to be slowly descending the ladder.

Half expecting to see the maze field come into view at any moment, I was surprised to find myself stepping onto a wet pathway in a soft misty rain clothed wood.

I could tell that it was early in a summer's morning. The air scented of leaf-freshness.

I began to stroll down that pathway into a little valley.

And as I was descending, I could clearly hear the sound of water gushing in the valley below.

And behold, on my right came I upon a delightful three-tier natural cascade dancing itself merrily, for surely twenty-five to thirty meters (eighty to a hundred feet) down the valley side, and all from a height of about five to seven meters (fifteen to twenty feet)!

I stood there in the misty rain looking up at it for quite some time.
Oh, it was beautiful.

And I was about to turn and stroll away when there appeared there before my eyes an angel; yes, an angel standing on a grassy mound up at the level of the second tier.
This angel was like no other angel that I had ever seen before.

He had great golden wings closed in behind him that reached above his head and down below his feet.
He was wearing a purple-blue cloak with green and white attire beneath, and knee-high light green ripple design boots.

There was a glistening silver ornate hallo behind his head of golden curls, and a single bright golden star shinning above him.

A fire-leaf sword pointing to the ground was in his right hand, and in his left a plain silver ball no bigger than a cauliflower.

He appeared to be standing within the misty rain.

I smiled up at him with giving a gentle wave.

He smiled in returned down to me, and then he was no longer there before my eyes to be seen.

I turned and beheld a little ways over from me, this lovely little church beyond a small stone bridge.
And beyond the church nestled in the trees was a Lourdes grotto.

I crossed o'er the bridge, and was about to enter the church when I found the door to be firmly locked.
I felt sad, for I would have loved to enter, this being a custom of mine.
Perhaps it was too early in the day for it to be open I thought.

With standing there in the canopied doorway, and looking out at the beautiful misty wood, and listening to the sound of the cascade, didn't I hear behind me the door being gently unlocked.

I slowly turned with expecting to see someone opening it from the inside, but no one appeared.
And I was about to place my hand on the door when seemingly, all of its own accord it opened inward.

I entered the small hallway.
There was no one there.

With turning my attention to a notice board on my right, I came to know that I had entered Glendine Church; Séipéal Gleann Doimhin which is located in the woods not far from an entrance to beautiful Ballynatray House: Ballynatray House on the western bank of the Blackwater River estuary, in the Barony of Coshmore and Coshbride, county of Waterford, and province of Munster.

With entering the church proper, I could sense that there was nobody else there save me, and that most likely there hadn't been any one there since the previous evening for such was the feeling I had at that very moment.

It was then I saw him!

Yes, the angel that I had seen up by the cascade was there depicted in perfect similitude in a window above the altar.
I was quite surprised.

With my eyes fixed on him I slowly walked up the central aisle, and knelt in the front seat on the left.

He was exactly as he had appeared to me outside by the cascade, except that now he was standing on clouds, and wasn't moving.

To his left was a depiction of Jesus standing on a rainbow, and to Jesus' left a depiction of Mary standing on the Earth with having seemingly unbeknownst her, an innocent little animal of the grass and trees, who in this moment of waking drowsiness has found himself to be partially in the way of her right foot.

Of all the angel's features, and who I could now know to be the Archangel Michael, it was his eyes that were most striking.
Wherever I sat in the church or be with moving about the church those strong eyes of his were always upon me.
And although they were strong they were not frightening.

With returning to the same seat in the front on the left, I sat up and was with reflection on the three window scenes, when Archangel Michael smiled down at me, and then spoke to me as follows.

"Richard my Sun Errant, here take my sword and raise it to the heavens.

And be with smiling, for this is the way of the Champion of the Lord Most High.

When you are upon the railing of eternity and the green fields be a no more in the beginning of your charm defined, place the plate upon the table."

And I did ask. "What plate?"

"The plate that has found its shape in the secret haven by the Alpha shore.

Shower Heaven with thanks and joy, and the Voice of the Lord Almighty will be forever, and aye raising thee up to be the Morning Glory.
Shine with the love of iron for verily you know little of its sacred qualities.

See the sword there in your hand, it has brought down the most powerful the world has ever anointed.
See how it quivers to the heavens for Heaven be its home.
Be of the iron way."

"No love ever have had I of iron, so how can I well be of the iron way?"

"Save the wind be in the trees no freshness in their branches be; the rains be in the sky no life in the soil be, and save iron be in its spaces no strength to seed will be.

Show me thy famed eyes that I may see in them for myself the beauty that is so well spoken of in the Highest.

Hear thee the fast-flowing waters of the cascading streamlet without?"

"Hear it I clearly."

"Can this streamlet be with flowing back up the hillside as if it were downward flowing?"

"What strange word is this, for who has ever seen water flowing upwards?"

"The fossils in rocks know the value of being in the past. I have an important journey to make, and I need you to accompanying me."

"Where are we going?"

"Be with accompanying me and see.
Here is the Gate of Heaven on Earth.
Silence in proximity be finding your deeper longing.
Open to the interior of greenness.

And be with joy for the Lord be abiding in thy bosom."

"I've no love for weaponry."

"Say not so, for even a shepherd in shepherding his precious flock to springs of living waters, has at times to wield his staff in warding off menacing wolves."

"In human society there are no wolves."

"Verily, you only see what you want to see, hear what you want to hear, and think what you want to think.

Take this Divine message given to thee by me, and share it unto the whole world."

"I'm sorry, but I've no interest left or have I even any ability to deliver divinely sent messages.
Please, be with finding another, for I need now more than ever before to be with the beauty of nature."

"Here is the message.

~ Light be in the High Heavens and Peace be on Earth. Come to me all you who hunger and thirst for beauty complete. Your search is over. ~ "

"These words have come to me many the time before, especially through the medium of the written word."

"They may be similar, and have been sent on numerous occasions, but alas no one has truly heard them, including it seems thyself.

Stand inside the Great Portico of the House to be, and be with viewing the hearts of all as they make their entrance. Be with seeing in their eyes the Light of Heaven.

Should there enter there before you on your watch, one whose glancing eyes frighten you to your very core, ask of him or her for a prayer of thanksgiving, and joy to Heaven.

Be no such prayer forthcoming, raise my sword in thy hand, and engage him or her in battle."

"Please, here receive your beauteous and powerful sword back, for I'm not one who is given to wounding or even going as far as taking the life of another."

"Should you not engage in battle with him or her, but instead simply leave this one enter into the Sacred Place, oh, believe me, when I say to you, unimaginable tragedies will as a result overrun the world."

"It is not that I'm turning my back on the world, it is rather that the back of everything is a safe place."

"Look into the depths of the floor there before the altar, and tell me what you see."

"I can't see anything there other than wood with clay beneath, with rocks beneath, and streams beneath."

"Do you behold the fading silvery ray of light emitting from this ball?"

"Yes, I do."

"This is love in fading decline.

Find yourself in Corinth by the sea for there the Light of the Dawn permeates all the golden fleeces ever shorn.
Fill the Mystic Moon with fresh lavender flowers.
Blow back the forest entrance to rediscover the ancient pathways.
Call to the eight winds to raise you into horizon's full view.
Shut out all interferences."

"You're without a doubt the most impressive presence among the three of you, yet the two others are by far the more powerful than thee.
Where is thy power?"

"My power is in thee."

"Why me, and why not someone more powerful and influential?
Why not the dancer by the Great River or the singer by the Snowy Lake?
Thy power in them would surely be far greater; would be far more effective than in someone like me."

"My power is strongest in weakness; thy weakness gives life to my strength.

There is a mighty wall that has in days, weeks, months and years of late been established on my way.
No longer can I freely roam throughout one of the most beautiful of lands on Earth.

Use my sword to smash this wall to shivers like you would a potter's earthenware.
Be of the iron way.

My land; my beautiful land must be without any and all obstacles.
Holy be my Land, Holy be the Peoples who dwell in my Land, and Holy be the Pilgrims that come to visit my Land.

When the heart is free the whole body is in the natural situationship.

I've come this morn before thy eyes and to thy hearing that you may be my power in the world to bring about life again to the heart."

"Please, oh, please ask someone else, for I'm just an ordinary struggling poetic mythmaker of this beautiful isle of Éire.
Seek out in the broad wide world those of greater knowledge, wealth, and power to smash this wall to shivers for thee like one would a potter's earthenware."

"My power will be best served in thee.
Little do you know, but you're stronger by far than the Greats of Old, yet, bound and restricted you've left yourself oft become, by being over attentive to the conventionalities found in your own reflections in the mirror of the other.

Go and touch with the tip of my sword that distressing wall, and it will I assure you at the very touch come crashing in shivers to the ground."

"If I am besieged by anyone or group as to with whose authority do I bring about such an action, how should I give answer?"

"Say to them with all confidence that Archangel Michael of the Almighty has given thee the authority to do so."

"What if they don't believe me?"

"Say to them, that in three days Archangel Michael will construct a House of the Almighty that will be with covering in expanse the Three Sacred Meridians; a House of the Almighty that will be of all peoples, of all creeds, and of all hopes.

In that Grand House of the Almighty will stroll in peace, respect, and love the Children of the Earth."

In a moment, I found myself to be standing on a spot immediately north of the beginning end of the wall spoken to me by Archangel Michael, back in Glendine Church of the Cascade of the Valley.

A little ways over from me was a village having a most beautiful name; the name Salem.

I could see that eight-meter (twenty-three foot) high wall be it made up of watchtowers, buffer zones, electric fences, trenches, thermal imaging and video cameras, sensors and razor wire, extending itself all the meandering way to its southern terminus.

I looked down at myself and found that I was clad in a purple-blue cloak with green and white attire beneath, and on my feet knee-high light green ripple design boots.

In my right hand I was holding Archangel Michael's fire-leafed sword, and pointing it to the ground.

In a moment, I heard from somewhere above me, and to the left, his now familiar voice speak unto me with,

"Be of the iron way."

I slowly raised the sword up until it was bright shinning in the sunlight.

In my heart I prayed,

"Lord be it so that this act that I've been called upon to carry out this day, may be found pleasing in Your sight."

And with that, I touched in the center the end edge of the wall with the tip of the sword.

No sooner had the sound of sword on concrete reached my ears, than the whole wall all the long meandering way to its southern point of completion crumbled into shivers, no bigger than grains of seashore sand.

The sound of the wall crashing straight down on to itself was almost deafening.

Peoples on either side of where the wall had once stood came rushing out of their habitations with tears streaming

down their faces, and prostrated themselves flat down on the ground out of respect for the mighty hand of the Lord working in their midst.

With rising to their feet, they joyfully most joyfully ran across over the harmless shivers and embraced each other as brothers and sisters, and as nieces and nephews that had not seen each other in ages.

In that most memorable and wonderful moment, the estranged Children of Abraham came to know that the love of the Almighty was now with them anew.

The Lord Almighty was creating a new creation in their own day, and they were been given the grace to be able to recognize it, and upon it the strength to be able to patiently form a new community of one.

No more in the streets and fields would be found the cries of children and mothers, sons and daughters, young men and old; no more would be found the fear of not knowing what was going to come next.

The Land, oh, the Land would be found to be as big as the hearts of the people.

Bread would be broken and joyfully most joyfully shared with the greatest of love, admiration, and respect.

For they would come to know that the Almighty has no favourites, but loves all who truly in their hearts seek for peace about the hearth, peace about the village, peace about the fields and deserts, and above all peace about the Worldland.

The endless days and endless nights of relatives fighting relatives was at long last over.

And I did see in mine eye, droves of peoples coming from afar to the Land; coming from every nation in the Earth with praising the Grace of the Almighty.
And they brought with them gifts of Thanks, gifts of Love, gifts of Hope and gifts of Joy to the newly reunited Olive-Date Family; one of the venerable families of World Families.

With seeing all this wonderment, I found myself to be back again in the lovely Glendine Church of the Cascade of the Valley.

I looked up and beheld a smile upon the face of Archangel Michael, and a wondrous softness in his gaze.
He had put his sword back in its scabbard.

And clear bright shining was the silvery ray from the ball in his left hand.

I sat there for a long time in quiet contemplation before going out to view the cascade.

Heavy misty leaf scented air greeted me at the door.

I stayed awhile there beneath the canopy pondering the beautiful scene until the mist had lightened off a little.

I strolled o'er the little bridge to the cascade.

Oh, the sound of the water gushing down and running its way beneath the pathway into the bigger stream was fantastic!

I stood there for sometime at the foot of the cascade listening to the sounds, scenting the air, and looking up to the spot where Archangel Michael had earlier stood.
And I was with remembrance of his smile.

With making my way up the misty pathway, I felt good to have been part of something historic.

Oh, who can truly appreciate how lovely it is to be here on the beautiful isle of Éire, strolling along on a soft misty summer's morn?
Heart, oh, my heart brimming over with thankfulness and joy.

With reaching the top of the pathway, I slowly ascended the súgáin ladder which was dangling there in mid air.
It was completely dry and still with its delightfully ambrosial scent of newly harvested grain.

At the level of the surrounding soft misty rain veiled treetops, I paused to look up at the sky.
It was sublime.

I looked down expecting to see the trees and the wood but they were nowhere to be seen.

Sky on high and I on the súgáin ladder were of a single rotation, and for how long I have no idea.

Then quite spontaneously, I found myself to be slowly descending the ladder, and stepping down into the great hillside field of gently swaying maze south of my village.

And in a moment the súgáin ladder was no longer there to be seen.

I came out of the field on to the roadway, and strolled on down for home by way of the House of Alms of old, down by the little park of the Ornate Rock, on beneath the great twin trees that stand before the House of Aged Couples of old, and on by the high hedge of the parish priest's house, only to pause awhile beside the lovely honeycombed Lourdes grotto situated there at the southern entrance to the village.

A bird's downy feather hued golden by the evening sunlight came wafting on the breeze and alighted in the Lady's gently fluttering white veil.

She smiled with its arrival and didn't try to remove it, but instead left it be there for as long as it wanted to linger.

And with Bernadette I found myself to be smiling with the Lovely Lady of the Comb.

In a little while, I continued on my way; continued on my way homeward down the golden hued street to the beautiful sound of the Angelus bell, calling we the people of the village and surrounding near distance, to be with a moment of silent thankfulness, and joy, for been given to living love, for yet another day.

Annotation:

súgáin - from Gaeilge meaning, 'a hay or straw rope' - To make a rope by twisting hay or straw.

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~ ~ ~ ~ ≈ *sailing on* ♪

Chapter **20** *A joyous signature*

Cliff-top Dromana House across the way looking majestic above the dawn waters of the Great River of the South.

Four mornings ago, I was standing on a grassy bank by the Great River of the South, on the opposite side from cliff-top set Dromana House.

The river in that stretch runs from north to south after coming on from Cappoquin, and heading on by Villierstown, and on for Ballynatray, and on out into the welcoming sea at Youghal Bay.

It was coming up on six when the sun rose over the isle on that morning, but it was a good thirty minutes more before it appeared above the Dromana woodland which is located directly south of the House.

The tide had been slowly coming up the estuary since about three in the morning.
That meant that high tide would be about nine.

With the sunrise not all the mudflats had yet been covered over.
This made for an interesting array of glistening colours.

From where I was, which was almost exactly due west of the House, the width of the river from bank to bank would have been about seven hundred meters (seven hundred and fifty yards).

Due east of me off on the Dromana side, and nestled on the bank in the woodland trees was an old stone arched tunnel-like entrance where boats may have been moored in olden days.

And down a little from it along the bank I could make out the ruin of a two-storey stone house.

I had been there on the riverbank since about five-fifteen.
It was so quiet and beautiful with the last stars of night slowly fading into the background as soft pink dawn began to appear.

I had been called from my dreams to come forth and witness on the banks of the Great River of the South the grandeur of new beginnings, and to become reacquainted with an old friend.

With the floating higher of sun and the expanding of the tidal waters, I decided to make for myself a simple rod from a length of river driftwood that I found in the nearby rushes.

And with taking the stems of fresh riverside flowers, I made for myself a fine long line that I knotted on to the end of the rod.
I was pleased with my work, and so did cast the line on the waters.

And there I sat on a grass-carpeted promontory with my legs dangling over the edge as I watched the green woven line, with its lovely purple flowers floating away on the surface of the waters.

The rising water was still about three meters (nine to ten feet) out from me.

Little winged insects would from time to time come and alight on the line, and even some small birds came and took to sampling some of its flowers.
Oh, and there came there too curious visitors from beneath, who came and gave a playful tug at this interesting wonderment.

With warming sun shining upon me, and the little animals of the air and water playing with the flower line on the glistening waters, and with reading some lines every now and then from a poetry book, I felt surely I was in a heaven on Earth.

Soon after seven-thirty, I decided to move back from the edge a little for by now the water had risen to within a few inches of my dangling bare feet.

The rising of tidewaters in a river is an amazing phenomenon to watch.
It is so powerful and determined.
And when you think that it hasn't been moving at all, it has already come a few feet.

I placed the rod and its pretty line on the grass, for I wanted to be giving all my attention now to the waters.

I found myself quite naturally recalling to mind the *Autumnal Floods* chapter from the Chinese Classic *The Chuang-Tzu* where it is recorded that when Autumn's streams and rivers run wild in full season, and be with pouring themselves into the Great Sea, that so great is the breadth of the flow, that from one shore to the other not even one with the greatest of sight would be able to distinguish anything from anything else.

I could imagine that scene from looking across out over the waters before me to the opposite bank, but there was no way I could appreciate what it would be like to be finding myself in the pathway of such a mighty flow.

I had once all right been caught in a typhoon in the port city of Mokpo, in Korea, when the whole sea seemed to pour in on the land like mighty tidal waves.
That was an experience I will never forget.
But for the Grace of Providence, I could have been one of the three hundred that were swept away out to sea that day, and were never again found.

I was with such thoughts and memories when I noticed a fine healthy wild honeybee come and alight on my right shoulder.
He was a real handsome fellow and just wanted to take a short rest there before moving on to dive head first into the nearby purple flowers that grew all along the bank.

I got up and went over to see him about his work.

He was in the company of three or four friends and they were very actively going from one flower to the next.
They would first alight on a petal, and then venture on in to collect the treasured ingredient.
They were very busy, so they were.

I was with enjoying watching them when I thought I heard a singular sound come from the woods up behind me. There was no mistaking.
It clearly was the sound of chimes.

Oh, and so beautiful!

And while I was about to consider where it might be coming from, didn't I clearly hear the sound of a Buddhist wooden hand gong being gently struck.
I had known that sound well and knew it to be coming from a Buddhist temple.
Yet, I also knew not of the existence of any Buddhist temple in those woods.

There I was standing in the company of the happy wild honeybees with my back to the Great River, and looking up towards the wood from which were dancing down to me the sounds of chimes and a wooden gong.
Without a doubt, I knew that somewhere in the woods there, there must be a Buddhist temple.
But that couldn't be, I thought to myself.

With such thoughts, I turned around to return and go and sit on the grass when my eyes couldn't believe their own sight.

And you are going to find this hard to believe, but there on the grass beside where I had been sitting was a white doe contentedly grazing away for herself.

And that wasn't all, for when I looked across out over the now full high tide river, didn't I behold where cliff-top Dromana House use to be, this splendid five-storey traditional Chinese Summer Palace.
Its golden roof was glistening in the sunshine.

Oh, it looked so beautiful; so beautiful an embodiment in architecture of Confucian hierarchical order.

I stayed for quite some time, just gazing over at it in wonderment, with recalling to mind the words of a Tang Dynasty poet,

"To look far into the distance, go up yet one more storey."

Down where the old stone arched tunnel-like entrance stood was what appeared to be an oratory, not at all unlike that of the one found on the beautiful Lake Isle of Guagán Barra, in the Barony of West Muskerry, though on a smaller scale.

And where the ruin of the two-storey stone house used to be, was now a very eloquent and dignified plum tree canopied, yellow, wooden, pentagonal pavilion of a traditional Chinese design.

While I was pondering all this beautiful scenery, didn't I notice in the north something coming round the bend in the river.

It was a boat!
And not just any boat, but a traditional Chinese riverboat, having one large green sail in the center, and two smaller ones of the same colour fore and aft.

Another having white sails soon came into view, and still yet another following having golden sails.

With passing on down the river between the Summer Palace and me, the happy crews waved over.
And I did return with waving most joyfully.

Vivid and charming were the eyes in the bows of their boats.

And I noticed that they were being sailed well over to the other side of the river, almost as if the crews instinctively knew that there were some mudflats to be avoided out in the middle.

With they passing on down beyond the oratory, and the pavilion, I heard this flapping sound coming from off over to the southwest.
I turned and, oh, what a wondrous sight I beheld.

There flying in over the tree tops was a flock of gold hued white cranes who flew on out o'er the Summer Palace, before wheeling in about to alight on an old lightening tree high up in the woods behind the pavilion.
They made such a pretty picture against the background of all green.

I went and sat on the grass where I had been sitting earlier, and didn't the white doe come and nudge me with the side of her head for me to rub her.

Her coat felt so soft and silky.
But it was her beautiful eyes that really fascinated me.
They were of a vivid soft jade like green with very slight tints of wispy pink clouds.

I sat there watching the last of the riverboats move about the bend off to the south, and wondered what the unveiling of all this scenery to my eyes could mean.

The whole place was very quiet save for the soft breezes in the chimes and the sounds of the waters playing with the reeds.

With watching the slow powerful flow of the tide at full height, I found myself quite naturally to be with beautiful words floating their way throughout my mind.

And although there are many ways to be expressing in a language or translating what you can appreciate in the original to be even more profound, you have to for the sake of the moment to be with making do with what has given you the greatest insight and joy.

~Yielding to let Tao be Tao be the way of Tao ~ Tao be Tao ~ Tao tao Tao ~

With the tidewaters now beginning to slowly return to the Great Sea, I was with enjoying letting my gaze wander along the opposite bank north of the Summer Palace, when I began to see something in the distance, and coming towards me on the surface of the water.
It resembled a large white bird albeit without having its wings outstretched.

And with that large 'white bird' getting closer and closer, I could make out that it was not a bird at all, but either a man or a woman walking on the waters.

With nearing still, I could make out that it was a tall man dressed in white traditional attire.

I don't know why or from where such a thought so spontaneously came, but didn't I find a great sense of humour coming over me, and I joked to myself that for he to be able to walk on water like that he must surely be a cork man.

The tall man was wearing something shinny on his chest.
I took his attire to be traditional Chinese and expected to be with seeing a Chinese man.

Yet when he was about fifteen to twenty meters (fifty to sixty feet) away from me, I could clearly recognise that he was not a son of China, but instead a son of Éire.

I stood up to greet him.

He was tall with short nicely kept black hair, and I would say he was in his late forties.

And then I knew that broad smiling man; yes, I knew who he was.

He was that grand man Edward J. Galvin.
And that wasn't any traditional Chinese attire he was wearing, but rather a white soutane.

It was the beloved, good humoured, tactful missionary, Reverend Father Edward J. Galvin of Newcestown, in the county Cork; the co-founder in October 1916 with Reverend Father John Blowick, a brilliant Professor of Theology at St. Patrick's College Maynooth of the Maynooth Mission to China which in March 1917 became the St. Columban's Foreign Mission Society; in honour of one of Ireland's greatest missionaries.

It was the beloved, good humoured, tactful missionary, and saintly man His Grace Bishop Edward J. Galvin of Hanyang Diocese, southeast Hubei Province at the confluence of the Han and Yangtze Rivers, some nine hundred kilometers (six hundred miles) inland from the port city of Shanghai.

I now clearly recognised his bishop's crucifix on a chain and it clipped onto the front of his soutane.
He was so young and very healthy looking with a fine golden tan as he came and stood there before me on the water a little out from the bank.

The water was almost at the same level as the grass on which I was standing, yet he was still that little bit taller than me.

Straight away out went the right hand, and in his lovely accent he greeted me with,

"Hello, Richard?
Nice to see you here in this lovely place by the Great River of The South."

"Your Grace I'm honoured to meet you."

His handshake was firm and gentle all at the same time.

"Richard here in this heavenly place, and please be with calling me Ned.
For aren't we all on the same standing in harmonious nature.
Ned now Richard will do fine."

"Thanks Ned.
I'm about to have some homemade cake with butter and honey, and a mug of tea out of a flask.
I'd be most pleased Ned if you would consider joining me."

"Richard I'd be delighted for it's been a long long time now since I've tasted that grand taste of homemade cake with butter, honey and tea, that is, tea with milk and sugar."

Ned came and sat with me on the grass.
He was sitting in the north and I in the south.
I buttered some cake and poured him a fine mug of nice hot tea.

And he did enjoy topping of the buttered cake with a good descent spoon of golden honey.

"Oh, Richard this is excellent!
It tastes very like what my good mother used to bake for us when I was young."

"Sung-ja baked that last evening for me, for she knew I would be going out well before dawn to be with viewing the river. "

"Convey my compliments to her Richard."

"I will of course.
Every cake she bakes is tastier than the previous one.

Oh, the river looks mighty Ned doesn't it when it's at high tide?"

"It does indeed Richard, surely.
The power of water is breathtaking."

"Earlier, at the sight of the rising waters, I found myself Ned quite naturally recalling to mind the *Autumnal Floods* chapter from the Chinese Classic *The Chuang-Tzu* where it is written that when Autumn's streams and rivers run wild in full season and be with pouring themselves into the Great Sea, that so great is the breadth of the flow that from one shore to

the other not even one with the greatest of sight would be able to distinguish anything from anything else.

I could imagine that scene all right from looking across out over the waters there before me to the opposite bank, but there was no way Ned I could appreciate what it would be like to be with finding myself in the pathway of such a mighty flow."

"Oh, I could tell you stories Richard, so I could about great floods in great rivers."

"If you have the time Ned, I would love to be with listening to one of them.
I'm a good listener as you know well."

"Don't I know it well.

All during the month of July, Richard of the year of 1931, the rain fell in torrents throughout the Yangtze Valley.
It was quite unusual to be having so much rain at that time of the year.
And we were all waiting with anticipation for it to let up but it never did.
It rained and rained continuously day and night.
It was making me feel very uneasy.

Unlike other years, I had this annoying feeling in my gut each morning when I got up, that something terrible was about to happen.

It was sometime Richard during the night of the 16th of July 1931 and the break of dawn on the 17th that I had this unbelievably troublesome dream, so I had.

Now let me tell you that I use to have some fairly troublesome dreams from time to time, but this was beyond all.

In the dream, I encountered many people who were camped out on a nearby hillside to our house, who were desperate with the hunger.

Every time I would walk among them they would be with catching me by my clothes and holding on to me for dear life until I would promise to bring them something.

"Wo-ti Chu Chiao … Wo-ti Chu Chiao … Wo-ti Chu Chiao …"
(Our (beloved) Bishop …)

But I was greatly struggling for I knew that I couldn't feed everyone.

Then I saw thousands of people all huddled in some old temples in Wuchang.
They were dying of cholera and dysentery.

To be looking at people hungry and starving is a terrible thing Richard.

In the dream people were fleeing in their thousands from what seemed to be floods or bandits or even a combination of both.

There was terror written all over their faces.

Then in a moment, I was someplace not very far away, and I could see those people were running from floods.
Floods had swept houses away entirely.

Where buildings still stood, the water was almost up to the eaves.

People were all over the place crouched together on dykes, homeless, and without any food.
I looked about and could see that all their crops were ruined; they had nothing.

Bandits had taken their boats and were robbing and killing on an unprecedented scale.

I saw thousands and thousands of refugees heading towards the Wuhan cities of Hankow, Wuchang and Hanyang.

Soldiers were posted on the banks of the Han River to prevent them from entering the triple cities as they were already well inundated.

Then in my dream, Richard I was back in our house, that is the Columban House in Hanyang, and was looking out one of the top windows.
It was raining very heavily and I thought I saw many people huddled among the graves of the large cemetery beyond the walls.
Then I found myself blocking my ears for I could hear babies crying most pitifully.

To be hearing little hungry frightened babies crying most pitifully in the night is a dreadful thing Richard.

People were rushing upstairs carrying everything they could from the kitchens.

I tried to go down stairs to help, only to discover a depth of water of some seven feet (two meters) on the ground floor and it was rising even more.

The whole area around our house had become one vast lake.

Then I was standing in the pouring rain on a hill at the rear of the compound, and no joking Richard, the entire countryside, as far as the eye could reach, had been turned into one vast stretch of water.

Richard, I've given you only the barest outline of that terrible dream, for no words could give an adequate picture of the reality of the frightful disaster depicted in it.
I woke up out of it with sweat running off me.

I wasn't in the better of it all that day, so I wasn't, and even for the following days.
I spent most of that day in the chapel trying to come to terms with its significance, and what more we would be needing to do in the event of such a terrible flood happening in the next few days or weeks.

In the solitude of the chapel, and about an hour and a half before midnight, there arose in my heart words that once had given me great courage.
And those encouraging words were Richard,

"I command you: be firm and steadfast!
Do not fear nor be dismayed,
for the Lord, Thy God,
is with you wherever you go!"

Those words were Richard strength enough for me.

For the Lord, My God, would be with me wherever I went, and whatever would happen.
I would be given the strength to lead from the front; to lead by example.

Whatever was going to come Richard, be it floods or marauding bandits or even a combination of both, my priests, sisters, lay helpers and I would be given the strength to nobly see it all through.

All during the month of July, Richard of 1931, the rain fell in torrents throughout the Yangtze Valley.
It rained and rained continuously day and night.

These rains, coupled with the snow-water coming down from the mountains in Tibet, caused the river, at this point, to rise to the unprecedented height of fifty-three and a half feet (about seventeen meters) above its winter level!
Imagine it; fifty-three and a half feet.

The first of the three cities to fall was Hankow.

When the dykes broke, this wild avalanche of water swept through the city, literally carrying all before it.
The ramshackle bamboo structures of the poor people were the first to go.

So sudden was the onrush that a great number of the people were still in their homes.

These little huts were tossed to and fro as so much matchwood in the water, and many of the occupants were seen and heard of no more.

It is said, that five thousand people perished by drowning the first day, in the onrush of the waters.

Heart-breaking stories Richard are related of the catastrophe.
Mothers could be seen in water up to their neck, holding their children high above their heads and crying out for help.

Everywhere hundreds of people were running hither and thither through the water endeavouring to reach a place of safety.

The bolder spirits amongst them were swimming here and there, trying manfully to save whatever they could after the wreckage of their little homes, while all along the streets the bodies of horses, buffaloes, and the other animals floated side by side with human corpses.

In less than a week Richard there was scarcely a square inch of dry ground in all Hankow.
The water was from six to twelve feet (two to four meters) deep in the greater part of the city.

Everywhere sampans took the place of rickshaws, and Hankow was transformed into another Venice, but without any of its romance.

A few days after the disaster, the greater part of Wuchang and Hanyang met with the same fate.

In spite of all our efforts Richard, we found it impossible to check the onrush of water into our house and compound.

The lake adjoining our mission grounds, swelled as it was by the over-flow of the Yangtze, quickly mounted our eight-foot wall, and in a short time there was seven feet of water in all the rooms of the ground floor, and twelve feet in the compound outside.

During these few hours we saved whatever we could from the storehouse and the rooms downstairs, but Richard many things were destroyed.

The small buildings in the compound were almost completely submerged, and our mission house became an island in a vast sea of water.

This state of things prevailed for three long months Richard, from the 28th day of July to the 27th day of October.

I was in every aspect living my terrible dream, save that the reality was even far more terrifying.

The congested ark-like conditions under which we were living would have been enough in any circumstances, but the woe and desolation of the poor people who fled to us from every direction made it almost unbearable.

At the time of their flight over eighteen thousand houses in Hanyang had already been inundated, and over eighty thousand people in this city alone had been rendered homeless.

In Hankow and Wuchang conditions were even worse.

Yet it was to the hillsides adjoining these cities that those homeless, poverty-stricken country people fled.
They came not in hundreds but in thousands, and in dire distress, looking for something to eat.

"Wo-ti Chu Chiao … Wo-ti Chu Chiao … Wo-ti Chu Chiao …"
(Our (beloved) Bishop …)

All had the same story to tell.
Miles upon miles of the low-lying land which they had been cultivating had been converted into one vast lake.

Houses everywhere were swept away, people and cattle drowned and they - the survivors - were rendered utterly destitute.

Nobody who had lived through those first days of the flood Richard can ever forget it.
They were days of terror and confusion and black despair.

But for the Grace of God, and the strength of each other, we would have never gotten through it.
That's for certain.

The hills adjoining Wuchang, Hankow and Hanyang were given over completely to the starving refugees.
The whole place was dotted with thousands of wretched little mat-sheds about three feet high.
There was scarcely a square foot of ground unoccupied.

In one of these mat-sheds each family of refugees lived. This diminutive covering was their only shelter against the burning sun of August.

Owing to the awful congestion and the poverty of these helpless people, sanitary measures of any kind were impossible, with what results I shall leave it to yourself Richard to imagine.

I simply cannot describe to you Richard the scenes of unspeakable squalor, sickness, and desolation that everywhere met our eyes as day by day we walked through these different camps.

Richard my priests, sisters and lay helpers did splendid work during all this trying period.
Every day from morning till night they lived among the refugees, moving from camp to camp - or rather from one mat-shed to the one next door, with giving out medicines and healing words, and administrating the Last Rites to those known to have been baptized ..."

There was a long long silence.

As the tidal waters on the Great River of the South before us continued to recede, we chatted on away about many things.

And by about three in the afternoon the river was found to be at its own level.
Its many glistening mudflats were drying off in the warm sunshine.

"Richard, I'll now be on my way."

"But Ned the water is so low and there are so many mudflats."

I was with saying those words when I noticed off to the right, over Ned's left shoulder, a cloud in the sky moving in a peculiar fashion.
It was forming itself into an arch; an arch that was glistening in the sunshine.

"Ned, look there in the sky!
What's happening I wonder?"

As the cloud arch came closer, I could notice that it was slowly rotating.
It was a bridge!
It was a bridge of seventeen arches with the one in the middle being the largest.

It came in over the waters north of the Summer Palace.

What a marvellous sight it was.
It was beautiful, and of wondrous designs and colours.

With gently rotating itself about in front of us, it rested in a north westerly to south easterly position across over the river.

It had bridged the distance between where we were sitting and the plum tree canopied, yellow, wooden, pavilion on the opposite side of the river.

And we did rise to our feet.

"Richard thank you for being such a wonderful listener. I have had such a great time talking to you about my life in China; of my love for the Chinese peoples, and their beautiful land.

I've truly enjoyed telling you stories of their noble heritage, religious beliefs, schools of thought, traditional system of education, sense of etiquette, the beauty of their spoken and written language, their building techniques and designs, and above all their warm-heartedness.

Every year from the 28th of July to the 27th of October, I'm here in this beautiful stretch of the Great River of the South to spend some time in quiet contemplation.

Here is my Shangri-la Richard; my Shangri-la were I become revitalized sufficiently to be able to return to T'ien Hia, and there for the rest of the year to be busy with my ongoing work along the banks of the Sungari, the Liao, the Hwang, the Hungtse, the Han, the Yangtze, and the Li of Guilin.

For I Richard must be with passionately keeping Our Heavenly Father's concerns alive and flourishing in the here below."

"In my heart as a living treasure Ned is your enthusiasm to live the Way of the Jordan, in the Land of the Noble Ancients.

May this Enthusiasm of the Blessed One be with you.
May it be before you.
May it be after you.
May it be in you.
May it be under you.
May it be over you.
May it be at your right hand.
May it be at your left hand.
May it be in the wide expanse.
May it be in the far distance.
May it be in the heights.
May it be in the hearts of everyone who thinks of you.
May it be in the mouth of everyone who speaks to you.
May it be in every eye that looks upon you.
And may it be in every ear that hears you Ned!"

"Go raibh míle maith agat Risteárd."

"Go n-éirí an bóthar leat Éamonn.
Go raibh an chóir ghaoithe i gcónaí leat.
Go dtaitní an ghrian go bog bláth ar do chlár éadain,
go gcuire an bháisteach go bog mín ar do ghoirt.
Agus go gcasfar le chéile sinn
arís, go gcoinní Dia i mbosa a láimhe thú.

With a blessed waving, the beloved, good humoured, tactful missionary, and saintly man His Grace Bishop Edward J. Galvin of Hanyang Diocese went walking on over on that lovely cloud bridge.

And I did continue to wave to him until he had passed on down beyond the middle distance.

With putting on my socks and shoes, and collecting my flask and my book of *Tang Shi San Bai Shou* poems, I continued on strolling with fond memories of his stories, along by the river south to the spot where I had left my carriage in the predawn.

It was less than a two kilometers (a mile) from where we had been chatting.

With His Grace having reached the pavilion, he waved over to me one more time before turning and heading for the little Guagán Barra style oratory nearby.
Verily, a saint by the waters.

Before boarding my carriage, I was with looking down beyond a wooden railing at a rowing boat moored in the reeds below me on my right, when I heard what sounded like the singing of a bird high up in the sky.

Ever before panning my gaze to the sky, I knew from the sound of its singing that it was no small bird.

With looking up, I beheld coming in from the south, this absolutely beautiful bird that had a wingspan surely of some twelve to fifteen meters (forty to fifty feet).
It was like no bird I had ever seen or heard before.

Surely, I thought to myself that this has to be the Venerable Sovereign of all birds.
A thousand beautiful birds it was all in one.

It came in so low before me above the surface of the waters that I could see out across o'er its broad wingspan.

His left eye was so vivid and beautiful as it looked over at me with passing on by up the river.

From the moment of first hearing him, and then looking up to see him coming gliding in most gracefully o'er the waters in front of me, the time lapse was hardly nine seconds.
Yet, didn't I most joyfully experience it as being nine thousand years.

And in my heart, I knew as clearly as bright sun be in the sky, that I had just seen a phoenix of the air, and had for most of the day been chatting with a phoenix of the land.

These were not the inanimate phoenix motifs of silk paintings and folding screens, but rather the very breath of life itself.

And I did bring forth from my carriage a simple lute, and there did play above the slowly tiding waters a joyous signature of the heart.

With boarding my carriage, I rode on along south by the river with seeing Villierstown boat slipway and Camphire House in the distance.

Veered westwards along through the lovely woodland for the Camphire Bridge o'er the Bride River.

How pretty the traditional thatched whitewashed cottage that is there before the bridge on the right hand side.

With reaching Headborough lands, I followed on along westwards beneath a wondrous canopy of tall trees, by way of Sapperton House.

Stopped for a while to admire two apple trees on the left, just before the old Kilwatermoy primary school.

On and on rode I along that lovely route, until the familiar sight of nestling Lisfinny House and Tower castle ruin with its field of golden grain close by came into view.

With seeing Lisfinny I always have a warm feeling that now I'm almost home.
The same is true when I see the Hill of Elksnmist.

With entering my sacred village, I waved to aged teacher Éamonn de Paor who was out for a leisurely stroll.

And with reaching the chapel gate, I dropped in to give joyful thanks for all that I had seen and heard by the banks of the Great River of the South.

"I'm with you wherever you go."

And I thought to myself as I knelt there in my usual place that perhaps at this very same moment His Grace Bishop Edward J. Galvin of Hanyang Diocese is happily saying his office in his oratory by the tiding waters.

I noticed saintly Mrs. Mary O'Brien to be over quietly saying her rosary before Our Lady. Mary always has such a lovely smile. Mary's mother was a poetess.

With strolling along golden sun-drenched East Street, I saw three silhouetted figures walking towards me along the footpath.
It was grand old Seán O'Donoghue with his son and his grandson about to enter his house.
And Seán did call out to me in his soft voice,

"Nice evening it is now Richard, isn't it, thank God?

"'Tis indeed Seán.

"And according to the forecast Richard tomorrow is going to be even a lovelier day with God's help."

"With God's help Seán."

And that happy gentlemanly three of white, brown and gold did enter that warm loving home.

And with passing before the door, Seán's wife Cathleen did come out to greet me with,

"It has been a lovely day Richard, hasn't it, thank God?

"It has indeed Cathleen, it has.
And it looks as if there'll be clear skies tonight with God's help."

"With God's help Richard."

And with strolling on along my precious East Street for home sweet home, I pondered lovely poetic mythologies, ah, lovely poetic mythologies for the generations.

Annotations:

T'ien Hia - from Chinese meaning, 'under Heaven' - an old name for China. Another beautiful name for it is that of **Chung Hwa Kwo** meaning 'the Middle Flowery Kingdom'

Tang Shi San Bai Shou - In Chinese literature, the Tang period (618-907 AD) is considered the golden age of Chinese poetry.
Tang Shi San Bai Shou [300 Tang Poems] is a compilation of poems from this period made around 1763 by Heng-tang-tui-shi [Sun Zhu] of the Qing dynasty.

Go raibh míle maith agat - from Gaeilge meaning, 'May you have a thousand blessings/kindnesses.'
A lovely Irish way of saying, 'Thank you very much.'

Go n-éirí an bóthar leat. - from an Irish blessing:

May the road rise to meet you.
May the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
the rain fall soft upon your fields.
And until we meet again,
may God hold you in the palm of His hand.

Risteárd Mac Suibhne Uí Éire

Happily living simply and plainly with
my wife and two children in this
a *21st century* of my era;
Happily living simply and plainly
here in this beautiful border village
that the people of my day call *Tallow*,
On the lovely isle we call *Éire*,
Of the fragile planet we call *Earth*,
Of the solar system I call *Garden*,
Of the spiral galaxy we call *Milky Way*,
Of the thirty galaxies or more we call *Local Group*,
Of the beyond and beyond which I call *Horizon*,
Of the that which we call *Great Universe*.

Go mbeirimíd beo ar an áit seo arís.
May good health be finding us here again in this place:
the place of mythologies in the making.

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